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JOSEPH KERMAN

Wagner: Thoughts in Season

When Wagner died in 1883 he left, as everyone does, full memories to his friends and to his enemies. His great legacy to the European consciousness was an ideology, and to the world of music a polarization, an alignment on either side of a split forced by confrontation with his scores. More tangibly, he left operas, music-dramas, and a set of *Gesammelte Schriften* running to ten gold-embossed volumes in the second edition, revised and augmented by the author. Wagner left, inevitably, debts, which (again inevitably) were to be taken care of by somebody else. The question I wish to raise is, to what extent are we still paying off these debts? For of course, over the years we have had to pay, and we have had to reckon in everything: *Das Judenthum in der Musik* as well as *Tristan und Isolde,* the split as well as the *Gesamtkunstwerk,* the dross of Wagnerism as well as whatever metal may be in Wagner's art.

By 1959 the friends and enemies have all been depersonalized into history; an obvious point, perhaps, but one that is worth noting. For so long as they lived, they extracted bitter interest in every transaction concerning the great man. Wagner was, to put it shortly, something of a monster in private life; and as that private life was well broadcast, the Victorians could not consider any aspect of the Wagner-complex without considering the moral man. This is not the place to debate how, if at all, such consideration should weigh with a modern historian or critic. I note simply that as vivid personal memories fade, Wagner's conduct can take its place in our customary uncomfortable historical perspective, along with that of Tasso, Caravaggio, Rousseau, and other unpleasant great men.

The ideology of Wagnerism is now also essentially a matter of history, but it is a history that must detain us. The very term gives pause; word-forms of this order are rather rare and suspect, especially so within the arts. There are no such ism's as Bachism or Mozartism or Schoenbergism, but there are Wagnerism, Orphism, Petrarchism, Darwinism, Marxism: all denoting frames of mind that go far beyond personal influence or personal propaganda, far

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beyond the strictly artistic, scientific, or social-scientific into the ideological realm. As soon as ideology begins by its very nature to transcend the local realities of the originating figure, it attracts the suspicion of professionals—musicians, scientists, or social scientists who see the fatal distorting appeal made in one direction to the dilettante, and in another direction to the mass. So as Wagnerism moved beyond music it moved with a good deal of hostility from the trade. And paradoxically, although Wagnerism had begun with an idea about art, one did not need to be a musician to be a Wagnerian. The ideology could flourish divested of any essential artistic import.

If, as may happen, an "ism" were to grow up around a man posthumously, or during his lifetime but without his active interest, it might possibly be passed over as irrelevant to his actual contribution. But of course this was not so with Wagnerism. The apologists are wrong when they claim that the ideology was manufactured only after Wagner's death, in the unscrupulous Bayreuth pressmill run by Cosima Wagner, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Glasenapp, Wolzogen, and the rest. Wagner invented Wagnerism, fostered it with the greatest care, and was for some years the first and only Wagnerian. What is more—and this touches at once the fundamental artistic problem—Wagner has always been suspected of caring more about Wagnerism than about art, of writing his music-dramas less as works of art than as evidence for Wagnerism. If there is any truth at all to this, it follows (paradoxically again) that we have to know Wagnerism before we can know Wagner. Or looking at it the other way: if there is no truth here, but only prejudice, we have to know Wagnerism in order to confront the prejudice. In any case, the debt to Wagnerism must be retired before we can begin collecting royalties on Wagner's art. An examination of Wagnerism, then, is important not only *per se* as a study of European culture of the last hundred years, but also as a step to an appreciation of Wagner as artist. The latter side of the question, of course, is the one that concerns the critic.

Wagner's whole career may be scanned from the standpoint of his development of Wagnerism. He first attracted mild attention in the 1840's, a provincial conductor and composer of operas in which such careful observers as Spohr, Liszt, and Hanslick already appreciated qualities of restless novelty. Actually, though the world

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was not yet loudly informed of the fact, Wagner was growing increasingly dissatisfied with the artistic situation as he knew it, and with the state of society as a whole. This dissatisfaction, symbolized by great debts, made him eagerly join Bakunin in the Dresden aftermath of the 1848 revolution, and participate actively enough to make it necessary for him to flee to Switzerland. Thus, more than he can ever have wished, Wagner found himself forced into a Quixotic rupture with society, a break that he was hardy enough to turn into a heroic, pathetic—but in any case into a prominent stance. Exile also completely interrupted Wagner's career as a musician. Instead he wrote voluminously for several years: tracts, pamphlets, polemics, treatises, and hundreds of letters in which ideas that had been in his head for some time settled into—Wagnerism.

That this ideology, Wagnerism, absorbed into itself much of the thought of the time is a commonplace; obviously it did, or it could not have succeeded so well. It may even be true that every important element of Wagnerism had been enunciated separately before Wagner. His role was to make a brilliant synthetic formulation, and this is perhaps most simply approached not from its origins in intellectual history, but from the rather practical standpoint taken by Wagner himself. Wagner was first an artist. Basic to his thought was a special high calling for art, a high calling that may be succinctly characterized as "magical."

R. G. Collingwood makes much of this term in his *Principles of Art*. A "magical art," as he defines it, "evokes of set purpose some emotions rather than others in order to discharge them into the affairs of practical life." Magical art is to be distinguished from "entertainment art," which evokes emotions simply to gratify the audience, and from "art proper," which does not set out to *evoke* emotion at all, but instead to *express* emotion. Under magical we can readily group medieval art, religious art, patriotic art, and various low-brow arts like weddings, balls, banquets, and the like. Even low-brow magical arts have an urgency in society which Wagner coveted; and as for the high-brow ones, he dreamed avidly of their dignity or dominance in the world of affairs. Greek drama was Wagner's favorite archetype, a festivity expressing not any personal vision but the very life-soul of the city-state, and channelling the powers of feeling to the common good. Had not Plato in-

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sisted that certain modes of music produce virtue, while others should be banished from the republic? "Art as expression," in Collingwood's sense, was altogether too private a concept for Wagner's aesthetic, as was Hanslick's notion of music as *tönend bewegte Formen*. "Art as Entertainment," however, Wagner knew well and reviled, and "Art as Magic," on the highest of high-brow levels and with Wagner as the grand wizard, was his ideal.

A basic commitment to magic is naturally a basic commitment to unreason. In best romantic tradition, Wagnerism always claimed that music-drama appealed to instinct rather than to reason. Many of Wagner's techniques bear this out, such as his opulent harmonic and orchestral sound, and his use of repetition sometimes to a soporific degree. "Don't argue, repeat" might stand as Wagner's motto both in prose and in tone; the characteristic tactic of the demagogue. Considered as a group, furthermore, the heroes of Wagner's mature works provide an exhaustive study of unintellectuality in all its subtle shades: Siegfried the joyful savage, Parsifal the pure fool, Tristan whose intensity of will transcends law and life, Walther the spontaneous singer inspired by nature's birds and by the eternal Eve. (Walther does have his *Doppelgänger* to teach him form in addition to content. But even Sachs says of Walther's song: *"ich fühl's, und kann's nicht versteh'n"*—which is enough for Sachs; as a good Wagnerian, he goes ahead and does his all for the hero.) Critical discrimination, on the other hand, was anathema to Wagner, and unscrupulously he pilloried criticism as pedantry and malice, making Beckmesser a personal caricature and a Jewish caricature for good measure. Wagner even opposed vivisection, an essentially analytical process which does indeed do violence to the *élan vital*.

But we are attempting to vivisect the ideology of magical art. In 1850, the ideal required two things: a new kind of art, and something to be magical about. The latter lay easily at hand, to a nineteenth-century German, in the gathering concept of the *Volk*, inchoate but free, impersonal but vital, true, and German. Thus Wagnerism plunged headlong into German *Kultur* mystique, with its corollaries of racial purity and anti-French sentiment. Art should discharge emotion to the purpose of driving the communal national consciousness along its dynamic march into the future. All this Wagner upheld emphatically, not only in the writings of

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his exile, but also later in the manual of statehood that he drew up for Ludwig II, *Was ist deutsch?*, and in the runic meditations of his last years. His *Gesammelte Schriften* formed a rich mine for later generations of mystic nationalists.

As for the former requisite, the new kind of art—that Wagner invented, and it remains one of the most remarkable intellectual achievements of the century (in spite of his anti-intellectual stance, which was not without an element of sham, as we shall suggest later). Since Wagner's new art is to stir the *Volk*, it must reach a hitherto unreached audience. Only some sort of theater, with its well-known appeal and its well-known mystique, can serve—an idea already fundamental for Schiller, as Carlyle had observed. Since communion is achieved not by reason but by feeling, and since music is the art closest to unbound emotion, the new art must be some sort of musical theater. Not of course conventional opera—Franco-Jewish entertainment music at its most degenerate—but a new organic combination, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The idea of synthesis, so dear to the romantic spirit, guarantees a super-art combining the virtues of all: drama served by music, poetry, gesture, and scene. The subjects must stem from national myth, which presents eternal if cryptic truths in ideal concentrated form. Since feeling, not reason, can reach the *Volk*, once again, a whole new armory of technical stratagems is required. Limitation of dramatic "business," relentless piling up of repetitions, new breadth of time-scale, a new steady pitch of intensity, *Stabreim*, leitmotive, orchestral continuity, transformation scenes, "endless melody," eight horns and four tubas—all were developed for the new magic.

Add to this the historistic dynamic interpreting this art as the chosen Art of the Future, and add to it the organic fallacy in aggravated form, and you have the main components of Wagnerian ideology. The orthodox felt not only that each Wagner music-drama was a perfectly organic work of art in itself, but also that the seven of them formed a single coherent corpus, sprung mystically from a basic seed. This far, at least, the organic ideal holds good: irrationality and *Volk* mystique cannot be dissociated from Wagner's concept of art or from his highly individual artistic techniques. The ideal of "Art as Magic" is comprehensible only in view of the mystique; the techniques are comprehensible only in view of the intended function of the art.

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The entire structure, to repeat, was worked out in Wagner's head after his exile in 1849. For six years he wrote no music at all, but instead bombarded an astonished world with an ideology that seemed to many dangerous visionary nonsense—as *Mein Kampf* did in 1925. In 1853, however, Wagner published privately the libretto for a gigantic *Gesamtkunstwerk, Der Ring des Nibelungen,* showing that he certainly meant business; and it soon became known that he had composed the first two parts of the *Ring,* as well as (in 1859) another mythical drama, *Tristan und Isolde.* Meanwhile, all that one actually heard was his early music, which could be pressed into the cause of Wagnerism only by means of outrageous special pleading. This was not lacking, and in 1860 Brahms, then aged 27, felt constrained to sign an unfortunate anti-modernist manifesto, thereby formalizing the corrosive rift in late nineteenth-century musical life. The manifesto served to magnify the Wagner myth. So did two famous fiascos of this period: the 1861 Paris riots over *Tannhäuser,* and the retraction of *Tristan und Isolde* from its intended première in Vienna after 77 fruitless rehearsals.

For years Wagner had little prospect for the performance of his three extraordinary music-dramas. Then, as is well known, luck changed. The new king of Bavaria, though only eighteen, was already a rabid Wagnerian, and under his aegis Munich saw the first performances of *Tristan, Die Meistersinger, Rheingold* and *Walküre* from 1865 to 1870. Incredible as it seemed, Wagner had succeeded; and the nineteenth century was fairly hypnotized by this success. Fascinating, also, was Wagner's ruthless personal life: his success with other men's wives, in his search for a mate who was also a Wagnerian, symbolized mastery not only for Wagner but also for his contemporaries—Siegfried the superman, after all, is rewarded by Brünhilde. Wagner celebrated the War of 1870 quite unmystically by sending unasked a triumphant *Kaisermarsch* to the Kaiser, and by circulating pseudonymously, and then actually publishing, a wretched skit mocking the fall of Paris, *Eine Kapitulation.* Wagnerism, he publicly suggested, should become the official ideology of a resurgent Germany now set on its historic mission. Bismarck was contemptuous, but Wagner had his way; and fifty years later, Hitler was not contemptuous.

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Wagner's way was the most formidable move in the history of Wagnerism: Bayreuth. The time was right, with German nationalism at the height, with five Wagner music-dramas newly before the public, and with the most impressive intellectual tribute to Wagner in the making: Nietzsche's first book, *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*. In 1872 the cornerstone was laid for the Bayreuth Festival Theater, a temple specially constructed in a special idyllic Mecca for special celebratory performances of works specially to be created by the Meister. For the opening rite (1876) nothing less impressive would serve than the great tetralogy (or, to follow Wagner's anxious analogy with Greek drama, the great trilogy with an introduction) based on the myth of the German *Volk, Der Ring des Nibelungen*. As Bernard Shaw and others have pointed out, Wagner's final implementation of his twenty-year-old plan did more credit to his Wagnerism than to his artistic integrity. To make the next festival (1882) more awe-inspiring yet, "Art as Magic" was carried to its logical conclusion. *Parsifal*—a gigantic communion service, a static drama of priesthood—absorbs Christianity into Wagnerism as blandly as Arthurian romance had absorbed pagan grail rites into Christianity. *Parsifal* too looks back twenty years, to *Tristan und Isolde*, in a subtle and very interesting and yet curiously reactionary way.

As the Festivals at Bayreuth followed more frequently, their importance for the Wagner myth grew. Wagner had not only written, composed, fought, borrowed money, and stolen women—all prodigiously—but also he had *built;* and to the nineteenth century, the tangible symbol of the *Bühnenfestspielhaus* and the Villa *Wahnfried*, where Wagner's body rests, confirmed Wagner as the superman for whom it had yearned since Carlyle. That Bayreuth instantly became no ideal pure shrine, but a somewhat vulgar commercial enterprise, made no difference. This fact may have depressed Wagner—though not deeply enough to hinder work on *Parsifal*—and it may have disgusted confirmed enemies like Nietzsche, who now saw in Wagner every abomination of nineteenth-century German culture. But confirmed friends, the pilgrim Wagnerians, the crowned heads and the humble members of *Wagner-Vereine*—these responded not to the realization but the ideal. Art had risen up and forced the world of affairs to make it a home and a temple. The artist was acknowledged legislator of mankind.

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More than 10,000 articles and books had been written about Wagner by the time of his death, and the climax of Wagnerism was still to come. The 1880's saw the French Wagnerian movement, inspired essentially by Wagner's writings (hard as that may be to believe today). Eduard Dujardin and Theodor Wyzewa of the *Revue Wagnérienne* were the standard-bearers; Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and Mallarmé lent their authority; Catulle Mendès, Verlaine, Huysmans, René Ghil, and Maurice Barrès served as the younger contingent. What fired the symbolists was the Wagnerian cult of feeling rather than reason. For this they were prepared to ignore Germanism so thoroughly as to rationalize *Eine Kapitulation* as a parody on German glee at the fall of Paris; they were prepared to conclude that neither music nor the combination of arts were necessary to essential Wagnerism. Of such paradoxes any mystique is capable. In England, true-blue Wagnerians (the adjective is Ernest Newman's) were issuing a magazine with the highly unlikely title of *The Meister*. The late 1880's also produced Nietzsche's devastating critique. To counter this, the Bayreuth publicists found an even better tactic than their usual ones of ignoring, distorting or vilifying opponents. Piously they commiserated with mad Nietzsche, and pressed him to their breasts as a brother Wagnerian on the basis of his early books.

The final, violent stage of Wagnerism was a political one, or perhaps we should employ the term coined by the Wagnerians themselves: a meta-political one. For Peter Viereck, who developed this thesis in a furious book called *Metapolitics,* Wagnerism stands to Hitlerism as the most important single fountainhead. That a political leader liked to relax at the opera has in this case unusual and ominous significance; Hitler's well-known devotion to *Lohengrin* and *Siegfried* was not merely a matter of affection, like the late Pope's affection for Bach, but a complete spiritual commitment. The line runs directly from the Bayreuth circle of Cosima Wagner and Houston Stewart Chamberlain to Alfred Rosenberg, Dietrich Eckart, and Adolf Hitler, who was introduced to Bayreuth in 1923. *Mein Kampf* is Wagnerian in style and content, and much later Hitler was to say, quite simply, that anyone who wishes to understand Nazi Germany must know Wagner. Much in Wagnerism the Nazis chose to ignore. But the nineteenth-century ideology provided soil and seed for all their key

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ideas: the communal spirit of the *Volk,* the relentless march into the future *("Lebensraum"),* the goal of racial purity, the cult of might, the appeal to the irrational, the demagogic technique of "the big lie," and the mystic idea of the *Führer.*

This is not to say that Wagner could be claimed as a Nazi by retrospect, even if the Nazis did celebrate their victory at the polls in 1933 by a ceremonial performance of *Die Meistersinger.* They could not even make a Nazi opera out of what is, in actual fact and in spite of what everybody says, not even a very nationalistic piece. However they could manipulate it as symbol and as magic; and they were right to see the precursor of the *Führer* in the Wagnerian hero. By the same token, Beethoven could not be claimed as a Wagnerian, however frequently Wagner extolled and conducted the Ninth Symphony—to herald the Dresden uprising, to celebrate the laying of the cornerstone at Bayreuth. But again, the Wagnerians were right to see the precursor of Siegfried in Beethoven's ideal of the hero—if not perhaps that of the "Eroica" Symphony, at least in the Schilleresque *Held* of the B-flat *alla marcia* in the Ninth. The romanticism of the early nineteenth century became in a later stage Wagnerism, and Wagnerism became in a later stage the ideology of Nazism, transcending the world of art altogether.

II

No further stage is evident. As was observed at the beginning of this long excursus, the ideology of Wagnerism is by now essentially a matter of history. The present has its own up-to-date mystiques, such as those of the Jungians and of the beat generation, but these can scarcely be traced to Bayreuth. Every once in a while, to be sure, we catch the true Wagnerian *Nachklang:* I caught it last year at a lecture by Mr. Karlheinz Stockhausen, as he explained how the music of instruments and human expression shall give way to the music of machines, and how a new concept of composition and a new type of concert-hall shall come into existence—not *should* or *may* or even *will,* but *shall* according to an unnamed but all-compelling historistic necessity. Still, it was just an echo. This one of Wagner's debts has been squared, at the price of the Nazi *Götterdaemmerung,* or *Götzerdaemmerung,* Nietzsche would have said. And today, while Nietzsche remains in our intellectual

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heritage, Wagner seems to be in danger of becoming a forgotten man. Our debt *to* Wagner, that is to say, is for the most part neglected.

It was not always so. In the decades around 1900, when Wagnerism was a living issue, the tremendous artistic impact of Wagner's scores was likewise fresh and unavoidable. Only now have we allowed this impact to dim with time, wrongly I am sure. In those decades, indeed, Wagner as a composer was the main issue in the musical revolution dividing what is now called contemporary music from the nineteenth century. Half of the composers tried to encompass Wagner and carry through the implications of his work, while the other half tried to contradict him. Then as now, the terribly complex relationship between Wagner-as-composer and Wagnerism was a source of confusion, harassment, and depression. Yet on the whole, Wagnerism *as ideology* had less effect in music than in certain other areas.

That is not strange: according to the musician's limited, professional, matter-of-fact way of looking at things, Wagner was simply another musician. Ideology commenced only as Wagner moved away from music. So while composers could be swept away by Wagner's technical innovations, they never quite cottoned on to the ideology. For one thing, Bayreuth saw not the slightest need for a successor to the Meister. Richard Strauss, one musician who was able to take over Wagner lock, stock and barrel, and that with amazing facility, turned the whole apparatus away from magic towards entertainment; so that in a certain sense he may be said to have betrayed Wagnerism more profoundly than anyone else. Scriabin, who would have added Indian mysticism, color, and scent to the already bulging *Gesamt* of Wagnerian orthodoxy, came to nothing. On the other hand, Bruckner and Hugo Wolf composed lasting symphonies and songs under the influence of certain of Wagner's techniques. So decisive were these techniques at the historical juncture, indeed, that it was a follower of Wagner in this technical sense—not a follower of Brahms or Verdi or Rimsky-Korsakov, but a follower of Wagner—who became the key figure of the twentieth-century musical revolution.

And around Arnold Schoenberg and his school there exists still today, in 1959, a split in musical life as jagged as that of Wagner's own time. This item of the Wagner *Nachlass* has not been paid

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off; if anything, we appear to have taken on a heavy second mortgage. Is it the same split, or some kind of modified continuation of the old one, or something altogether fresh? The question is, I think, definitely worth pursuing. In the contemporary musical consciousness, the importance of the twelve-tone phenomenon and serialism would be hard to over-emphasize.

Actually two schools should be distinguished: the original Viennese twelve-tone group formed around Schoenberg, and the recent international serial group formed around the memory of Anton Webern, Schoenberg's radical pupil. Between both of these schools and musical Wagnerism, striking parallels appear at once, at any rate on the surface: the same apparatus of composers, favorite conductors and performers always ready to present their work, devotees and hangers-on, intellectuals and publicists, magazines, societies, little festivals. Though the modern movement has always been much humbler in scope than Wagnerism, it has recently achieved a certain analogous chic. A little below the surface, the movements have in common the mode of polemic, the mood of an élite, and the adherence to a historistic view of musical progress. Like the Wagnerians, the serialists are marching along the one truly modern path, which has evolved inexorably from the past, in face of a reactionary opposition that is as powerful as it is underhanded. Equally scornful are the members of this opposition, armed with arguments very similar indeed to those of the anti-Wagnerians. Twelve-tone music is too dissonant and chromatic for man or beast, too complicated, unsingable. It consists not exactly of "endless melody," but certainly of an endless unarticulated flux. The steady high level of intensity frays the nerves—as Hanslick complained of "continuous nervous unrest" even in *Die Meistersinger*. According to a somewhat more elegant criticism, twelve-tone music is feeble rhythmically (Nietzsche on Wagner: "the complete degeneration of the feeling for rhythm, *chaos* in the place of rhythm . . ."). Below specific objections lies once again a blind conviction that the music is being composed less for its own sake than to justify an abstract, extra-musical system. What is more—and this turns the historistic argument back on itself—twelve-tone music is considered decadent on account of its roots. Wagner was accused of vulgarity *à la* Meyerbeer; Schoenberg is accused of tawdry romanticism *à la* Wagner. The twelve-tone

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school has to live with *Verklärte Nacht* and the Berg *Sonata,* just as Wagnerism had to live with the Prelude to the Third Act of *Lohengrin.*[1]

Now, even if there were no more connection than this, I would think it a matter of likely significance that the *form* of the Wagnerian quarrel is so clearly echoed in the twelve-tone quarrel—even if the *content* were not. This whole way of thinking about music was unknown before Wagner, or at any rate before Wagner crystallized the growing conflict in nineteenth-century music; though we take this way very much for granted today, it has its own peculiar modernity about it. However, surely the connection lies deeper than the form of controversy alone; and with all due care and with all due sympathy in both directions, I should like to examine analogies in content. As we have seen, the essence of Wagnerism was a partly extra-musical structure and a mystique. But is not the very same true of serial music? Obviously the old structure and the old mystique differ enormously from the new ones in their actual natures. Equally obvious, to me, is the similarity between the two schools simply on the basic of their essential orientations around *a* structure and *a* mystique.

Structure for the Wagnerians was a relentless multiplication of musical, poetic, dramatic, philosophical, and ideological details to create the magical *Gesamtkunstwerk.* Structure for the original twelve-tone school was a systematic application of a special method in composing a musical work of art. Starting with what has been called his "precompositional assumption," the composer selects a set or row, a fixed ordering of the twelve available notes of the scale. Then as raw material, he uses pitches only in the sequence of the row or of certain derivatives of the row (transposition, inversion, retrograde, and combinations of these). From these origins, the later serial school has developed methods requiring much more complex operations on the row, and controlling musical elements other than pitch—rhythm, timbre, dynamics, and so on—by means of analogous "precompositional assumptions." To describe all this as structure will cause no difficulty, but to call a structure "extra-musical" or half-extra-musical which is so directly

[1] With Wagner the accusation of vulgarity actually antedates *Rienzi!* Newman quotes the following remark by Heine, who knew Wagner in the Paris days: "Do you know what makes me suspicious of this talent? The fact that he is recommended by Meyerbeer."

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involved with the act of musical composition, may appear mistaken and prejudicial. I grant and stress that the term as used here means something quite different from Wagnerian extra-musicality. Nevertheless: in the very concept of the row, exhaustive and rigorous as it is; in the frankly mathematical nature of the derivations and operations, notably with the latest serialists; and in the speculative quality of "precompositional assumption" itself—in all these I think we can hardly fail to see something extra-musical at work. That vaguely similar things can be seen in some great composers of the past, too, in Josquin and Bach and Mozart and Wagner, proves merely that extra-musical ideas have been affecting great music for a long while.

What may cause more difficulty is reference to a twelve-tone or serial mystique. The fact is that serialism is felt (not thought: felt) to offer a key to the musically good. It provides control by formula over the raw material of music, it solves problems of logic and organization, and most important of all, it beards that great chimera of modern music, organicism. Indeed, the mystique is essentially one of organicism; to the most superficial twelve-tone sympathizers, application of mathematical technique guarantees an organic whole, which is to them tantamount to success. The fantastic apparatus of mathematical set theory and acoustical formulae, the shibboleth of "total organization," so-called—these belong to the most extreme new serialists, not to Webern or Schoenberg. Nevertheless, in a quieter form the idea of artistic success through increasingly rigorous control undoubtedly played its part with the original twelve-tone composers. The classic statement of this mystique has been made in artistic form, in Thomas Mann's panoramic novel *Doctor Faustus,* whose hero is a mythical first twelve-tone composer. The modern Faust achieves a "breakthrough to the subjective"—an equivocal redemption—through a diabolic pact whereby he renounces humanity and even reason, and suffers a cold bond to the mathematical and the occult, in order to gain the strictest objective mastery over artistic resources. This excruciated dialectic Mann presents unforgettably, with the greatest imaginative penetration and sympathy. Mann was also able to see Wagner more steadily than most observers.

Schoenberg, however, publicly repudiated the book; with half of his strange being he fought against mystique, which is certainly

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more than can be said of the advanced serialists. To Schoenberg and his most intelligent sympathizers, serialism is just a technique, a "method of composing with the twelve notes," and true artistic problems come only after the "precompositional assumption" and all the manipulations of the rows. The historical "necessity" of Schoenberg's development is always insisted on. But the trouble with this non-mystical explanation is that serialism, viewed merely as a working method, seems to everybody else artistically (if not perhaps historically) arbitrary, imposed from the outside, and above all labored. Why this method rather than another? why the passion for rigorous application, which could bring Schoenberg himself in his late years to incorporate dogmatic members of his row in unheard grace-note chords? and conversely, what justification can be found for so-called free twelve-tone composers—composers who are, as it were, just a little bit pregnant? Viewed as a mystique, however, the twelve-tone system presents no problems at all. Number mystiques have nourished the arts since the time of Pythagoras, with good results as well as bad. It is certainly not remarkable that in this scientific, uncertain age, musicians and artists should seek a talisman.[2]

Let there be no misunderstanding about the manifest differences between Wagnerism and serialism. The new mystique is a compositional mystique, not a world view. The new structure is a technical structure, and even its extra-musical quality may be said to be technical rather than philosophical. The twelve-tone and the serial schools eschew magic, demagogy, aesthetic-politico-racial superstructure, and even personality. The very names are not "Schoenbergism" but terms severely expressive of technique; the literature comes in magazines called not *The Meister, La Revue Wagnérienne, Bayreuther Blätter,* but *The Score, Polyphonie, Die Reihe.* Most (not all) of this literature is highly professional, beginning with Schoenberg's written contribution, a *Harmonielehre* —and Schoenberg was a great teacher, unlike Wagner and unlike every other great composer since Bach. Personality is not the issue here; if it were, we might reflect on the ironic, indeed tragic contrast between Wagner and Schoenberg in the outward course of

[2] By far the best discussion of serialism yet to appear (at least in English) is in the exchange of articles by Peter Stadlen, Roberto Gerhardt, Roger Sessions, and George Perle recently published in *The Score*. The example of the grace-note chords (in Schoenberg's *Violin Concerto*) is from Perle's article, "Theory and Practice in Twelve-Tone Music," June 1959.

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their careers, to say nothing of their conduct. In serialism the *Führer* concept is totally absent, as irrelevant to a technical movement as it was essential to Wagner's all-embracing ideology. Consequently serialism has more than one single master, and is exerting a more profound, more flexible influence on the course of music than Wagnerism ever did, for all its pride in romantic dynamism.

All this is true; yet there is one more bond, and this of course the deepest one, between Wagner and the twelve-tone system. In the historical moment, Schoenberg did not proceed illogically. He was meeting the great problem in musical style that was his debt inherited from Wagner—the problem stated emblematically in a famous book-title: *Romantische Harmonik und ihre Krise in Wagners Tristan.* (The study is by Ernst Kurth, from 1920.) Romantic music, seeking to mirror the inner life of feeling, had instinctively clouded clear forms wherever possible; most seriously, clouded the traditional framework of harmony and tonality. Seeking intense expressivity, romantic music leaned towards more and more chromaticism—a tendency that weakened the tonal system very specifically, by drawing attention away from harmony and towards linear impulsion. All this came to a head in the extraordinary score to *Tristan und Isolde,* which for most critics remains Wagner's finest work, as well as the crucial document in music of the later nineteenth century. *Tristan* challenged the very postulates of music as it was known: the centrality of a tonic note, triad, or key; the accepted hierarchy of other notes, triads, or keys in reference to the tonic; the standard rhetoric of tendencies and relationships between one sound and another. For fifty years music hovered anxiously around this challenge, which Wagner took care to aggravate by many vexed, beautiful passages in his later operas. Schoenberg wrestled with musical organization first of all quite in Wagner's spirit, but as he followed through the implications of *Tristan,* the question of musical repetition, in particular, grew more and more problematic. Schoenberg's solution was to leave classical tonality altogether, and organize music in a radically different way. As a frame of reference for the "rightness" of sounds, he developed the serial principle, self-defined by a private "precompositional assumption," rather than accepted according to the tacit tradition of tonality.

The analogy with perspective may perhaps be helpful here. By

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Wagner's time, tonality as the fundamental binding force of music was thoroughly weakened, under the stress of expressive linear chromaticism. Schoenberg's abandonment of tonality was as drastic a step as the abandonment of perspective in painting; as drastic and, some would say, as necessary.

It was obvious that Wagner had brought music to a breaking point. What caused the crisis, it is hardly necessary to add, was not simply the interest of his searching experiments, but rather the authority, that is to say the integrity, of his operas as works of art. The situation was desperate enough; all serious composers in the early part of the century were trying to erect some kind of structure from the fallen bricks of classical tonality. That Schoenberg and Webern should have attempted a drastic solution is much less remarkable than the character of that solution: the rigid systematization with its strong leanings towards a mathematical mystique. The interesting fact is that analogues to this rigid systematization—the way they arranged the bricks—are already evident in the Wagner operas.

This seems a paradox; Wagnerism is dogged by paradox. What has Wagner's cult of irrationality and his endless, vague, emotional trance to do with a technique which has been accused of being cold and mathematical—and which, it must be said, has never properly nullified the accusation? The paradox runs all through romanticism, starting before 1800 with Novalis' maxim of *"Systemlosigkeit in ein System"*—systemlessness as system. Seen from one side, this idea glorifies irrationality. Seen from the other side, it sets up a system. And so it must be for the artist; romanticism might seek to imitate life in its elusive, self-contradictory chaos, but the artist if he wanted to do anything at all—whether to express his soul or to influence others magically—had to come to a point. Art has to assert form on content. Perhaps indeed the more the artist wishes to give the impression of formlessness, the firmer must he draw the secret bonds of artistic form. The slice of life, the stream of consciousness, the impressionist haze, and the expressionist nightmare are far from formless in artistic realization. The paradox comes out in Maurice Maeterlinck's *Pelléas et Mélisande,* for instance, a play dear to musicians on account of the beautiful (and curiously Wagnerian) musical setting by a leading anti-Wagnerian, Debussy. The action appears to revolve

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around moody *non-sequiturs* and aimless people drifting in and out; but just below the surface lies the chromium grid of the well-made play. The paradox comes in *Ulysses,* a dream-like evocation organized more minutely than any other major work of literature since the *Divine Comedy.* It comes in Alban Berg's *Wozzeck,* whose subject is crack-up, and whose form is an odd anthology of tight purely-musical structures.

In the music of the nineteenth century, it was Wagner who reflected the paradox of Novalis most strongly. He worked and schemed and plotted for his magic. The ancient Egyptian priesthood is said to have made a great secret scientific discovery, steam power, in order to rig miracles. A later age unmasked them; and though Wagner's *Gesammelte Schriften* are conspicuously silent on the subject of intellectual structures, these have become more and more apparent as analysts vivisect the scores themselves.

Intellectual organization for Wagner was first a matter of leitmotive structure, as was well understood at the time. The function of the leitmotive is manifold: to work an elaborate cross-reference system for presumptive dramatic good, as well as to explain the action to an audience which is by design half-unmusical, but which as communing body must not be left in doubt. Another function is technical: as the musical continuity grows larger and more tenuous, the time-scale expands, and tonality becomes more vague, it is urgent to have as many organizing themes as possible—to have plenty of *foci,* as it were, around which the fog can precipitate. Sometimes Wagner handled leitmotives in a drab mechanical way. With this in mind, Jacques Barzun interprets Wagner less as a romantic than as a "mechanist"—the insight is important, though the conclusion does not necessarily follow.

In addition to leitmotive structure, Wagner used minute organization by phrase, period, and key; the "endless melody" is structured down to the bone. Guido Adler seems to have understood this first, around the turn of the century, and his ideas were exaggerated in the Wagner analyses of Alfred Lorenz, which are notorious in musicology as the *locus classicus* for Procrustean lopping. Nevertheless, although half of what Lorenz saw in Wagner existed only on his own drawing-board, the other half was true, important, and something of a revelation. For instance, it had often been said that in spite of his claim to be following Beetho-

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ven, Wagner worked his themes less by development than by repetition and sequence; what had not been realized was how rigorously this work proceeded—"mechanistically" indeed. Furthermore, very curious long-range structures came to light. To take an example from *Die Meistersinger:* the Overture is built around four keys (C, E, E-flat, and C again); then four hours later, and at ten times the length, the final scene of the opera is built around exactly the same keys. Another example, from *Tristan:* the piece begins in A-minor and ends in B; the key directly between them, E, is somehow avoided in all the hundreds of modulations contained in the opera—avoided and saved for one appearance: the beautiful passage in Act III where Tristan attains his maximum serene consciousness *("Wie sie selig, hehr und milde wandelt . . .").* An example from *Parsifal:* to conclude the piece on a note of huge serenity, Wagner picked on the sound of a plagal cadence, already at hand in his "Grail" motive, the so-called "Dresden Amen." After moving from the Neapolitan key D plagally up a fifth to A, he moves up another fifth to E, up another, and another, and another, and another—six times in all, exactly half way around the full tonal circle.

This type of organization is far from twelve-tone organization; but the two have in common a mood, a quality, and that is their schematic quality. An artist who would go so far towards systematization as to multiply a progression six times, might go the rest of the way and group all twelve notes of the scale in a set pattern. An artist so hypersensitive to the key of E-major, in the five-hour flux of *Tristan und Isolde,* might develop similar concern for the very note E, and once he had sounded it, might not want it again until all the eleven other notes had intervened. The parallelism of keys in *Die Meistersinger* brings up a crucial question at once: has this structure any aesthetic import, or is it purely speculative? is it *heard,* or is it an instance of "paper" organization? Something similar is asked about *Ulysses* and the Pound *Cantos.* The very same question is asked all the time about serial music, not only in reference to its formation around the row on a small scale, but also to its modes of coherence on a larger scale. In contemporary criticism this question is central, and the analogy with Wagner should serve as a tool in the answering; or *vice versa.*

Analogy only; analogy in spirit but not of course in actual de-

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tail. With this reservation clear, the relation between Wagner and contemporary music may be seen to be more than historical. Wagner's musical organization prefigures in a certain respect Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique and also the fantasy of "total organization" developed by Stockhausen and others. That a technical, even hermetic aspect of Wagnerism should survive in modern music while more blatant aspects are discredited is, once again, characteristic of the resolute technical limitation of the serialists. The new technical mystique depends even more critically than the Wagnerian on the illusion of organism, on the indestructability of works that must be judged according to their own "precompositional assumption," on their technical virtuosity, on their logic and economy. And while "economy" is probably the last word that anyone would think of applying to Wagner, it does finally explain itself as the back of the coin of Wagner's insistence on organic synthesis.

III

Recently I spent an afternoon looking through the literature on Schoenberg's unfinished opera *Moses und Aron*. Much of this literature is by twelve-tone adherents, and some of it is pretty impressive stuff; yet the name of Wagner is contained in it hardly once. In its fundamental dramatic conception, however, *Moses and Aaron* is the most egregiously Wagnerian piece since *Parsifal*. (Notice, this is not to imply that the piece sounds like Wagner, or that Schoenberg's philosophy is at all like Wagner's, or that his rhetoric resembles Wagner's; I simply say that in its fundamental dramatic conception, *Moses and Aaron* is the most egregiously Wagnerian piece since *Parsifal.*) The work is a didactic racial epic of momentous import. The concept of the *Volk*, indeed the very term, occurs more prominently than ever in Wagner, even in *Die Meistersinger*. The libretto, gauche as only a homemade libretto can be, treats in symbolic terms of universal ethical and political problems; and if Bernard Shaw could see Bakunin and contemporary socialist doctrine in the *Ring*, I can certainly see in *Moses and Aaron* the idealistic Zionism of Theodor Herzl and Rabbi Magnes pitted against the political Zionism of Ben-Gurion. The action consists of static dialogues arranged in a stiff dialectic plan—with the exception of the famous Golden Calf

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Scene, where stage directions out-Wagner Wagner's vanishing castles, swimming Rhine-maidens and magic fires: four Naked Virgins are to be stabbed and their blood caught in cups, after which rapacious stripping of the chorus is the order of the day. There is blood, sex, *Liebestod,* even the quintessential *Schlange.* There is a direct parallel to, and derivative of, *Stabreim.* There is the by now customary rigorous construction and enormous complexity of the score. Close to 400 rehearsals were required for the first performance—shades of *Tristan!*—and that first performance came twenty years after the work was composed; facts which the enthusiasts have greeted with the customary cries of martyrdom and panegyric.

Moses and Aaron belongs in this discussion for several reasons. First of all, it bears witness to an almost unbelievable survival of Wagnerian dramatic conception in the work of the central, inescapable, brooding figure of twentieth-century music. Second, it shows how skittishly Wagner is handled today even by the élite (for so the twelve-tone adherents regard themselves). Wagner stands for romanticism; Wagner stands in some obscure way for bogus; his name would dirty the modern masterwork. And if this élite shies from Wagner, so much the more does the opera-going public, which sees Wagner less and less; so much the more does the new important mass-audience made up of phonograph listeners, who have been able to buy twelve different recordings of *La Bohème* but not a single complete *Siegfried.* This is the age of Mozart, Webern, perhaps Puccini, maybe Vivaldi, certainly not Wagner.

However, a third reason to bring up *Moses and Aaron* is the serious one. Here is Schoenberg's largest, most ambitious, and according to many critics his greatest work. It is a work that ought to be in our ears right now, for the posthumous first performance was only in 1954, the first stage performance came three years later, the record was issued and reviewed in 1958, and the third performance took place a little while ago in Berlin, to the accompaniment of mild riots. *Moses and Aaron* has the authentic aura of a masterpiece. What is to be made of this piece, with its new problematic dimensions added to the standard difficulty of any Schoenberg score? The question, which is scarcely to be met by marching along with any school or ism, may be helped by Wagner. Wagner is needed today, if for no other reason than to clarify

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Moses and Aaron. Every element in the latter that calls for clarification—the mystique, the complication, the innocence, the impact, the aura—has its analogous element (not identical, but analogous) in the Wagner canon. It should be as unthinkable to deny the defects of *Moses* as to deny those of *Parsifal;* it should be unthinkable to deny the transcendent artistic power of one work or the other on account of defects. Of course nothing will be settled by speculative analogy; what counts always is the critical ear. But the old work can help define a stance for the new. The same applies *pari passu* to twelve-tone music in general, as has been suggested, though there obviously the relationship is a good deal more complex.

In short, we have to settle Wagner's debts, and then we have to settle our own debt to Wagner, if our credit is to be really good for contemporary music. One might even suppose that close study of Wagner would be necessary for anyone engaging in modern musical composition. However this may be, it is certainly true that a fresh effort to encompass Wagner is necessary for an adequate critical or historical grasp of the music of the present. Answers are needed to the questions about bogus, vulgarity, insincerity, magic, over-extension, over-complication, paper organization, organicism, and the unquestionable incandescence that the operas still attain. This is not the occasion for such an effort, which I have adumbrated elsewhere. I suggest only one preliminary axiom: resist all pressure to regard the *oeuvre* as an inviolable, necessary, superbly constructed organic whole. There is no such artistic entity as "Wagner"; only four fantastic works of art—*Tristan* and *Parsifal,* the *Ring, Die Meistersinger*—with their successful and unsuccessful aspects, with their great beauties and their *bétises.* Organicism is not the issue. Even this much, perhaps, hints at an attitude for more recent music, and indicates the importance of the half-historical, half-critical undertaking that I advocate.

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A. R. AMMONS

Silver

I thought Silver must have snaked logs
when young
She couldn't stand to have the line brush her lower hind leg
In blinded halter she couldn't tell what had loosened behind her
and was coming
as downhill
to rush into her crippling her to the ground

And when she almost went to sleep, me dreaming at the slow plow,
I would
at dream's end turning over the mind to a new chapter
let the line drop and touch her leg
and she would
bring the plow out of the ground with speed but wisely
fall soon again into the slow requirements of our dreams
How we turned at the ends of rows without sense to new furrows
and went back
flicked by
cornblades and hearing the circling in
the cornblades of horseflies in pursuit

I hitch up early, the raw spot on Silver's shoulder
sore to the collar,
get a wrench and change the plow's bull-tongue for a sweep,
and go out, wrench in my hip pocket for later adjustments,
down the ditch-path
by the white-bloomed briars, wet crabgrass, cattails,
and rusting ferns,
riding the plow handles down,
keeping the sweep's point from the ground,
the smooth bar under the plow gliding,
the traces loose, the raw spot wearing its soreness out
in the gentle movement to the fields

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When snake-bitten in the spring pasture grass
Silver came up to the gate and stood head-down enchanted
in her fate
I found her sorrowful eyes by accident and knew
Nevertheless the doctor could not keep her from all
the consequences, rolls in the sand, the blank extension
of limbs,
head thrown back in the dust,
useless unfocusing eyes, belly swollen
wide as I was tall
and I went out in the night and saw her in the solitude
of her wildness

But she lived and one day half got up
and looking round at the sober world took me back
into her eyes
and then got up and walked and plowed again,
mornings her swollen snake-bitten leg wept bright as dew
and dried to streaks of salt leaked white from the hair

Prospecting

Coming to cottonwoods, an
orange rockshelf,
and in the gully
an edging of stream willows,

I made camp
and turned my mule loose
to graze in the dark
evening of the mountain.

Drowzed over the coals
and my loneliness
like an inner image went
out and shook
hands with the willows,

and running up the black scarp
tugged the heavy moon
up and over into light,

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and on a hill-thorn of sage
called with the coyotes
and told ghost stories to
a night-circle of lizards.
Tipping on its handle
the Dipper unobtrusively
poured out the night.

At dawn returning, wet
to the hips with meetings,
my loneliness woke me up
and we merged refreshed into
the breaking of camp and day.

Jersey Cedars

The wind inclines the cedars and lets
snow riding in
bow them
swaying weepers
on the hedgerows of
open fields

black-green branches stubby fans under snow
bent spires dipping at the ground

Oh said the cedars will spring let us rise
and I said rain
will thawing
unburden you
and will
they said

we stand again green-cone arrows at the sun
The forces I said are already set up

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but they splintering in that deep soft day
could not herd
their moans
into my quiet speech
and I bent
over arms

dangling loose to wind and snow to be
with them assailing the earth with moans

Bourn

When I got past relevance
the singing shores
told me to turn back

but I took the outward gray
to be
some meaning of foreign light

trying to get through and
when I looked back I saw
the shores were dancing

willows of grief and
from willows it was not far to
look back on waves

So I came to
the decimal of being
entered and was gone

What light there
no tongue turns to tell
to willow and calling shore

though willows weep and shores sing always

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Canto 1:

you cannot come to unity and remain material:
in that perception is no perceiver:
when you arrive
you have gone too far:
at the Source you are in the mouth of Death:

you cannot
turn around in
the Absolute: there are no entrances or exits
no precipitations of forms
to use like tongs against the formless:
no freedom to choose:

to be
you have to stop not-being and break
off from *is* to *flowing* and
this is the sin you weep and praise:
origin is your original sin:
the return you long for will ease your guilt
and you will have your longing:

the wind that is my guide said this: it
should know having
given up everything to eternal being but
direction:

how I said can I be glad and sad: but a man goes
from one foot to the other:
wisdom wisdom:
to be glad and sad at once is also unity
and death:
wisdom wisdom: a peachblossom blooms on a particular
tree on a particular day:
unity cannot do anything in particular:

are these the thoughts you want me to think I said but
the wind was gone and there was no more knowledge then

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Canto 7:

here are some pretty things picked for you:

1) dry thunder
rustling like water
down the sky's eaves

is summer locust
in dogfennel weed

2) the fieldwild
yellow daisy
focusing dawn

inaugurates
the cosmos

3) the universe comes
to bear
on a willow-slip; and
you cannot unwind
a pebble
from its constellations

4) chill frog-gibber
from grass
or loose stone
is

crucial as fieldwild
yellow daisy:

such propositions!
each thing boundless in its effect,
eternal in the working out
of its effect: each brush
of beetle-bristle against a twig
and the whole
shifts, compensates, realigns:
the crawl of a slug
on the sea's floor

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quivers the moon to a new dimension:
bright philosophy,
  shake us all! here on the
bottom of an ocean of space
we babble words recorded
  in waves
of sound that
cannot fully disappear,
  washing up
like fossils on the shores
of unknown worlds:

  nevertheless, taking our identities,
  we accept destruction:

  a tree, committed as a tree,
  cannot in a flood
    turn fish,
  sprout gills (leaves are
  a tree's gills) and fins:
    the molluscs
  dug out of mountain peaks
  are all dead:

Oh I will be addled and easy and move
over this prairie in the wind's keep,
long-lying sierras blue-low in the distance:
I will glide and say little
(what would you have me say? I know nothing;
still, I cannot help singing)
and after much grace
I will pause
and break cactus water for your lips:

identity's strict confinement! a risk
  and possibility,
granted by mercy:
in your death is the mercy of your granted life:
  do not quibble:

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dry thunder in the locust weed!
the supple willow-slip leafless in winter!
the chill gibber of the frog
stilled in nightsnake's foraging thrust!
how ridiculous!
grim:
enchanting:

repeating mid night these songs for these divisions

Canto 8:

every evening, down into the hardweed
going,
the slop bucket, heavy, held-out, wire handle
freezing in the hand, put it down a minute, the jerky
smooth, unspilling levelness of the knees,
meditation of a bucket rim,
lest the wheat meal,
floating on clear greasewater, spill,
down the grown-up path:

don't forget to slop the hogs,
feed the chickens,
water the mule,
cut the kindling,
build the fire,
call up the cow:

supper is over, it's starting to get
dark early,
better get the scraps together, mix a little meal in,
nothing but swill.

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The dead-purple woods hover on the west.
I know those woods.
Under the tall, ceiling-solid pines, beyond the edge of
field and brush, where the wild myrtle grows,
I let my jo-reet loose.
A jo-reet is a bird. Nine weeks of summer he
sat on the well-bench in a screened box,
a stick inside to walk on,
"Jo-reet," he said, "jo-reet."
And I
would come up to the well and draw the bucket down
deep into the cold place where red and white marbled
clay oozed the purest water, water celebrated
throughout the county:
"Grits all gone?"
"Jo-reet."
Throw a dipper of cold water on him. Reddish-black
flutter.
"Reet, reet, reet!"

Better turn him loose before
cold weather comes on.
Doom caving in
inside
any pleasure, pure
attachment
of love.

Beyond the wild myrtle away from cats I turned him loose
and his eye asked me what to do, where to go;
he hopped around, scratched a little, but looked up at me.
Don't look at me. Winter is coming.
Disappear in the bushes. I'm tired of you and will
be alone hereafter. I will go dry in my well.
I will turn still.
Go south. Grits is not available in any natural form.
Look under leaves, try mushy logs, the floors of pinywoods.
South into the dominion of bugs.

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They're good woods.
But lay me out if a mourning-dove far off in the dusky pines
starts.

Down the hardweed path going,
leaning, balancing, away from the bucket, to
Sparkle, my favorite hog, sparse, fine black hair,
grunted while feeding, if rubbed,
scratched against the hair, or if talked to gently:
got the bottom of the slop bucket:
"Sparkle . . ."
"grunt, grunt . . ."
"You hungry?"
"grunt, grunt . . ."
"Hungry, girly?"
"grunt, grunt, grunt . . ."
blowing, bubbling in the trough.

Waiting for the first freeze:
"Think it's going to freeze tonight?" say the neighbors,
the neighbors, going by.

Hog-killing.

Oh, Sparkle, when the axe tomorrow morning falls
and the rush is made to open your throat,
I will sing, watching dry-eyed as a man, sing my
love for you in the tender feedings.

She's nothing but a hog, boy.

Bleed out, Sparkle, the moon-chilled bleaches
of your body hanging upside-down
hardening through the mind and night of the first freeze.

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Canto 10:

the soul is a region without definite boundaries:
it is not certain a prairie
can exhaust it
or a range enclose it:
it floats (self-adjusting) like the continental mass,
where it towers most
extending its deepest mantling base
(exactly proportional):
does not flow all one way: there is a divide:
river systems thrown like winter tree-shadows
against the hills: branches, runs, high lakes:
stagnant lily-marshes:

is variable, has weather: floods unbalancing
gut it, silt altering the
distribution of weight, the nature of content:
whirlwinds move through it
or stand spinning like separate orders: the moon comes:
there are barren spots: bogs, rising
by self-attrition from themselves, a growth into
destruction of growth,
change of character,
invasion of peat by poplar and oak: semi-precious
stones and precious metals drop from muddy water into mud:

it is an area of poise, really, held from tipping,
dark wild water, fierce eels, countercurrents:
a habitat, precise ecology, of forms
mutually to some extent
tolerable, not entirely self-destroying: a crust afloat:
a scum, foam to the deep and other-natured:
but deeper than depth, too: a vacancy and swirl:

it may be spherical; light and knowledge merely
the iris and opening
to the dark methods of its sight: how it comes and
goes, ruptures and heals,
whirls and stands still: the moon comes: terrain:

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Canto 12:

a tea-garden shows you how:
you sit in rhododendron shade
at table
on a pavilion-like lawn
the sun midafternoon through the blooms
and you
watch lovers and single people
go over the steep moonbridge at the pond's narrows
where flies nip circles
in the glass
and vanish in the widening sight except for an uncertain
gauze memory of wings
and as you sip from the small thick cup
held bird-warm
in the hands
you watch
the people
rising on the bridge
descend into the pond,
where bridge and mirrorbridge merge
at the bank
returning their images to themselves:
a grove
of pepper trees (sgraffito)
screens them into isolations of love or loneliness:
it is enough from this to think in the green tea scent
and turn to farther things:
when the spirit comes to the bridge of consciousness
and climbs higher and higher
toward the peak no one reaches live
but where ascension
and descension meet

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completing the idea of a bridge

think where the body is,
that going too deep

it may lose touch,
wander a ghost in hell
sing irretrievably in gloom,
and think

how the spirit silvery with vision may
break loose in high wind

and go off weightless

body never to rise or spirit fall again to unity,
to lovers strolling through pepper-tree shade:

paradise was when
Dante
regathered from height and depth
came out onto the soft, green, level earth

into the natural light, come, sweat, bloodblessings,
and thinning sheaf of days:

Canto 17:

I shall
go down
to the deep river, to the moonwaters,
where the silver
willows are and the bay blossoms,

to the songs
of dark birds,
to the great wooded silence
of flowing
forever down the dark river

silvered at the moon-singing of hidden birds:

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27 March

the forsythia is out,
  sprawling like
yellow amoebae, the long
    uneven branches—pseudo-
podia—
  angling on the bottom
of a pool of spring-clear wind:

shall I
  go down
    to the deep river, to the moonwaters,
where the silver
willows are and the bay blossoms,

to the songs
  of dark birds,
    to the great wooded silence
of flowing
forever down the dark river

silvered at the moon-singing of hidden birds:

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VALDEMAR KARKLINS

Encounter in the Dark

THE TRAIN SLOWED DOWN and at last, with a jerk, stood still. People in the compartment stopped talking about the effects of the war, shortages, the cold weather; all rose to their feet. There was a greater bustle and noise than at the other stations, a heightened sense of urgency, and Zupans realized that the train must have reached its final destination.

"Stuttgart Main Station!" The voice of the railway official grew louder, rang out beyond the window, and faded away. "All change here!"

Zupans rose but could not move in the crowded narrow compartment. Elbows and knapsacks dug into his sides; a man stood straddled across both rows of seats, lifting something from the rack above, and his legs blocked the way. A heavy suitcase came gliding down, and its corner caught the side of Zupans' head. The man did not apologize. It must be quite dark here, Zupans thought, momentarily dazed with pain. It is lucky my cap didn't fall off. Then the crowd pushed him out onto the platform.

Damp, cold air suddenly gripped his knees and spread slowly to his waist, his chest. He had sat in the unheated train for hours, shivering, but now he realized how warm it had been there. A chill drizzle mixed with fine, wet snow beat against his face, and the wind smelt of dank rubble and burnt-out fires. This smell always excited and upset him.

The crowd pressed past him, everyone hurrying in the same direction, half-running, impatient, uncivil, ruthlessly pushing and pulling him along. Suitcases and baskets knocked into him and grazed the backs of his legs. Men's and women's voices shouted, aggrieved, spiteful, sullen; there was rarely a note of carefree joy or even of indifference. Where are they running? Zupans thought. What's the hurry? A herd of cattle.

Something caught his boot; Zupans stumbled, his right foot firmly wedged as though in a fox-trap. There was the sound of breaking glass, and his boot sank into something soft and pulpy. A man's voice, constricted as if he were bending down or carrying a heavy load, gasped:

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"You idiot! Where do you think you're going? Can't you see . . ."

The voice broke off as though cut with a knife. Suddenly there was silence around Zupans. It has choked you, has it? Zupans thought. Oh yes, it has choked you all right . . . Then there's light here, it must be one of the platform lamps.

He jerked his foot out of the basket and went on, angrily submitting to the onward pressure of people, suitcases and parcels which filled the whole length of the platform.

Where are they running? Zupans thought, grinding his teeth, deliberately slackening his pace. They'll soon be home. They've got a room near-by, hot food on the table, a wife in a soft bed. They don't know how lucky they are, they are never satisfied. What more do they want? Panting, sweating, they drag their suitcases, sacks and baskets with them. They think riches are something that can be put into a sack, and so they tear each other to pieces like wolves. They've had their lesson; one would have thought they'd understand its meaning. An angry God had stood by the human ant-hill, lashing it with a whip of iron, a hundred times, a thousand times, heavily, mercilessly. But it still had not been enough. They were more dull-witted and greedy than ever.

Hurried footsteps, light, nimble, heavy, clumsy, splashing, thudding, clattering past. A babel of voices, heavy, laboured breathing—a herd of cattle. Will this platform never end?

He came up against a solid wall of backs: here was the gate at the barrier. A tall woman with a hard, heavy middle pushed against his back. He guessed that she was with child, and there was a sudden faintness in his knees and a hot wave rising into his throat. But he made no attempt to shift his position, to avoid the contact that burned him. Then he heard the woman's frightened whisper: "Gustl, look . . ." Louder, a man's voice: "Where?" And then: "Come away! You mustn't look at such things, in your condition." They fell back and let others pass. Zupans went cold with fury; he gnashed his teeth. He could have kicked this abomination, fully clothed and yet unconcealed, which he had secretly desired a moment ago. The queue moved jerkily forward.

"Stop," the railway official called out. "You there! Hand over your ticket!"

Zupans, maddened, stuck out his tongue. The man stopped short and silently removed the ticket from Zupans' army cap.

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Outside the barrier, the passengers quickly dispersed. Ice-cold muddy water splashed underfoot. Zupans felt it seeping into his right boot. He walked straight ahead, with no thought of caution; it was as crowded here as it had been on the platform, but he did not collide with anybody. The place was lit up, people made way for him, and in this crowded station building where, in spite of the late hour, people scurried about like ants, Zupans felt hopelessly alone. It was always the same: when he was in a crowd he was overcome with loathing, but when he was left to himself he suffered.

He had long pondered over this journey, he had looked forward to it as to the beginning of a new life; but now, with the very first steps he took, he realized the futility of such a hope. The burnt-out station building was cold and draughty, but Zupans shivered with a cold no thermometer could register. Nothing will come of it, he thought. How could I have pinned my faith on some tearful nonsense that occurred to me in sleepless nights? Nothing can come of my wanting to be like the others—they only foster and guard their own defects. They are beggars boasting of riches, cripples posing as strong men, invalids hiding their sores. Do I really want to say to them: Look at my wounds, I am a beggar like yourselves, more vulnerable even than you are, let us be friends? What a fool I am.

I know only too well what they want, Zupans thought, stopping for a moment on the ice-covered flight of steps on which people kept running up and down. Yes, bow low before them, ask the beggar for alms, tell the sick: You are strong, rich and healthy, all of you; I alone am different. Then they'd give me something, they'd help me a little, to persuade themselves that it is really so. But that would mean a return to where Zupans had come from. He did not want that. Make the journey back again? No.

He climbed down the stairs. People chattered and milled all around him, everybody was in a hurry, and among the jostling inhabitants of this earth he was like a man strayed from Mars. A path always opened before him, and as long as there was light he could walk through the throng like a ghost.

An iron grating rattled under his feet, then came a wide pavement, a quick downward stumble, the street. It did not matter where he went, or how he began. All he needed was courage. He trembled in the piercing wind, chilled and embittered. With a

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menacing snort, a small car shot past him, bespattering him with icy mud and snow. Wheels screeched behind him, heavy vehicles rolled by with a deafening rumble, and the din was punctuated with the rhythmical clatter of horses' hooves. The street was full of terrifying movement and incalculable noises which materialized, fell upon him, and vanished. Zupans lowered his head and went on, as though penetrating into a thicket of thorns. Never mind, he thought obstinately, there is nothing to fear. Anything rather than go back.

Suddenly, among the rumble, clatter and clamour, there arose a giant of uproar, overpowering the pigmy noises around it. It came nearer and nearer, growing in strength; with a deep-chested roar it made straight for Zupans, shaking the earth and filling the air with its suffocating breath, and it was like the one noise which Zupans could never forget, which terrified him at night, dreaming or awake, the noise of a forty-ton tank rolling over the trenches and sweeping everything before it with its searing breath of flame. Zupans instantly forgot his grand defiance; he jumped aside, panic-stricken, out of the giant's way. At that moment, which was as swift as an invisible sword-thrust, a thing of iron screamed with rage and pain behind him, a sudden rush of cold air struck his side like the blast from an exploding mine, he jerked his body backwards, and two noises in front of him united in a thundering commotion as if a bridge were crashing down a ravine. The brakes of a tram gave a sly, furtive little hiss, a bell jingled despairingly, something toppled over, something thudded and tumbled like an avalanche, accompanied by the hysterical mirth of splintering glass. Zupans lost his balance, and fell. Beside him lay the injured machines, a rattle in their throats, and, as though far away or under the ground, there were faint human voices shaking with impotent rage.

Clumsily, Zupans rose. He tried to fight down his terror and recapture his rebellious mood, but his knees gave way beneath him, and he could barely keep on his feet.

"Have you gone mad?" a voice roared with such fury that Zupans expected a blow or a kick. "What do you think you're doing, creeping under the wheels?"

"You'll pay for it," shouted an older, deeper voice. "You'll pay for the glass and the repairs. Police! Where's a policeman?"

"What's going on here?" A calm and manly voice; the police-

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man. "You there—is that how you cross a street? You've caused an obstruction. It's a punishable offence. I've never seen anything so stupid in all my life! Are you drunk? I'll . . . I . . ."

And then came the silence which Zupans had waited for.

He had stepped forward, and now he stood in the intersecting beams of car lights. He had lost his glasses; in the glaring light, his face was a grey mask, blind, mutilated. The two drivers, the policeman and the rapidly collecting crowd stared at him and fell silent. Agitated, his breath coming in gasps, Zupans raised his short arms, rounded, smoothly healed stumps, and rubbed them against each other; one arm was amputated above the wrist and the other almost to the elbow, and the icy wind had reddened them and given the scars a bluish tinge.

"Oh God," the policeman said dully. "Oh God!"

Zupans heard hesitant, inquisitive foosteps converging on him. At first the questions were tentative and uncertain, but then they came hard and fast, and he was barely given time to answer.

"Are you hurt?"

"How do you happen to be here at all?"

"Have you nobody to accompany you?"

"Where have you come from?"

"I've come from the station," he said.

"Where do you live?"

"Are you a foreigner?"

"Where do you want to go?"

And again—"Are you hurt?"

"Into the town," Zupans said. "No, I'm not hurt. But I've lost my glasses."

"Here are your glasses. I've picked them up," said a woman's voice by his shoulder.

"Move on! Move on!" shouted the policeman. "Don't jostle! And you—have you any relatives in this town?"

Zupans did not answer. The policeman was silent for a moment.

"Can you walk?"

"Yes."

"All right, then, come with me. I'll take you to the station hostel."

"Don't go! I want a written statement," demanded one of the drivers. "It wasn't my fault."

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The other driver shouted furiously: "Is that so? You are blind, too, eh? Whose fault was it if not yours?"

"I'll be back at once," the policeman interposed. "Come along."

"I can take him there." The same woman's voice.

The policeman made no answer.

"Isn't it scandalous that such people are walking about!"

"You should be ashamed to talk like that!"

"You are my witnesses! It wasn't my fault!"

The voices merged and became blurred, gradually dying away.

A strong hand carefully led Zupans back to the pavement. He walked awkwardly, bending over with shame.

"I know where the hostel is," the woman's voice said, still close to Zupans' shoulder. "You can entrust him to me."

The policeman stopped.

"All right. Tell Mrs. Wagner that I've sent him. And you—you mustn't walk about the town by yourself. You're lucky to be alive. It was touch and go."

Firm, measured steps quickly faded away. Zupans felt the light pressure of a slim, gloved hand above his elbow. A quiet voice said softly: "Come with me."

Increasingly irritated, Zupans made no reply. It had all ended, right at the start. He had barely walked ten paces, and straight away he was being taken to a hostel. He mounted the steps in stubborn silence.

"The hostel is on the left. It isn't far."

Zupans stopped and jerked his arm away.

"I'm not going to the hostel," he muttered aggressively.

The woman took hold of his elbow.

"No? Where do you want to go?"

"Take your hand away! Thank you. Mind your own business."

"Why won't you come to the hostel? There you'll get . . ."

"I'm not going there," Zupans interrupted her. The woman caught her breath. He could feel her searching glance.

"Very well, as you wish. But I can't leave you here, alone as you are. Where do you want to go?"

"Nowhere. Never mind, where. Don't bother me!" His chin trembled, and his anger gave him fresh strength.

"Let's go somewhere else, then," the quiet voice said peaceably. "There's a restaurant at the station. Shall we go there?"

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"All right . . . What is it you want of me?" Zupans asked bitingly.

"I want to help you."

Zupans gave a toneless laugh.

"Why are you laughing?"

He did not answer.

Entering the restaurant, they plunged into an unclean warmth filled with the breath of innumerable people; plates clattered somewhere in the distance; there was the dishwater smell of nondescript soup and the faint odour of beer, insipid coffee substitute and unsavory stew concocted of ingredients for which no food coupons were required. Judging by the freely drifting tobacco smoke and the volume and pitch of voices, it was a large place with a high ceiling, like a cinema. They walked a little way into the restaurant. The woman stopped, and two people sprang to their feet and offered them their chairs. They sat down at a table already occupied by two persons. The one dropped his spoon on his plate; the other set down his glass of beer. Zupans could feel them staring at him, holding their breath. In a moment, one of them counted out some small change, threw it on the table, and walked away; he was the one who had eaten from a plate. The other remained.

"Wouldn't you like to put on your glasses? They aren't broken," the woman said. She spoke evenly, almost casually, but her voice was young and pleasant. This tone of gentle indifference jarred on Zupans' nerves, he could scarcely control his temper.

"Never mind, I can see just as well without them."

The waiter came up to the table. "What do you wish to order?"

"What can we have?" the woman asked.

"Coffee, beer, stew and bread. That's all. It's late."

"Stew and bread, please," she ordered, searching her handbag for bread coupons.

"Yes, madam." The waiter withdrew.

"Have you no friends or acquaintances in this town?" the woman asked.

Here it comes, thought Zupans; she is the inquisitive type. His temper rose. She wants to know who I am, where I come from, what my nationality is, why I don't go back, whether my brothers and sisters are married, how many children they have, whether my grandmother suffers from rheumatism. She won't go away until she has ferreted it all out.

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"Yes, I have," Zupans said. "My fiancée. A lovely fair-haired girl. She was to meet me at the station, but she must have been a little late, and she missed the train. With beautiful women, such things are excusable. She'll come any moment now. What else do you want to know?" He gave a short laugh.

The woman was silent.

"I said she'll soon be here. You can go home now. Thanks for the trouble you've taken."

She did not stir. Neither of them spoke for a while.

"Flame-thrower?" inquired the man opposite. "Eastern front?"

Zupans recognized the voice although the speaker was a stranger. He had often heard that voice. These were the kind of questions asked by a man who knew, who did not have to be told anything. They were questions which already implied the answer, and there was no idle curiosity in them, only understanding.

"Yes," Zupans said.

"And your hands? Frost-bite?"

"Yes. Twenty-four hours without help."

After a brief silence the voice spoke again. "Yes, it's a bloody mess." They had said all there was to say.

The waiter put a plate of stew and a spoon on the table. "Your dinner, sir." The woman paid. Zupans blushed with embarrassment. He despised the waiter so intensely that he did not even tell him off. Plate and spoon indeed. Who was the blind man here?

"Well, good night, pal," said the voice from the trenches. "Keep your chin up. We're not dead yet. And your girl . . . she's all right." He walked away with lifeless metallic steps that beat a peculiar tattoo as though some three-legged beetle were laboriously making its way across the floor. Zupans listened, profoundly depressed. His features twitched, and he turned his face away.

"Aren't you going to eat?" the woman asked.

"No."

"Why not? The stew is hot."

"Do you want to watch me doing a circus act? Can you imagine what it looks like when I eat?" Zupans could scarcely control his exasperation.

"I'll feed you."

"Don't be ridiculous!"

All around, there was a monotonous hum of voices. It dulled his thoughts, and he fell into a state of weary indifference.

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"Why are you angry with me?" the woman asked.

"Because I don't understand what you want."

"I've already told you. I want to help."

She is of the charitable kind, he thought. She won't rest, she is determined to do me a good turn, and then she'll run and tell her lady-friends and her aunt, and they'll all have a cup of coffee and quiver with pity and Christian charity. Before she goes she'll put two Reichsmarks into my pocket, maybe also a food coupon, for good measure. Perhaps she'll want to know my address, so that she can call on me some Sunday with her aunt and her lap-dog. The aunt has never seen such a sight. Neither has the lap-dog.

He said wearily: "All right, go on, help me as quickly as you can. Do what you have to do, and then leave me alone!"

"You must eat, you know," she said. She got up and stood beside Zupans. Picking up the plate and spoon, she deliberated for a moment, then she returned the plate to the table and put her left arm round his neck; holding his head, she began to feed him. "Please," she said, "please eat!"

Suddenly he no longer heard the noises of the restaurant. All the people seemed to have gone. There was a breathless hush, and he felt the dark looking at him with many pairs of eyes. He bent slightly forward, and gave in. Let her have her own way, he thought; she'll leave all the sooner. She'll stay for another moment, and then she'll be gone.

The touch of her warm, timid hands melted something in Zupans' breast. The strange alien world which had held him captive for two years and more, a world that had neither sun nor stars and surrounded him with threatening noises, with silence in which sudden terror lurked, with smells that went to his head, lured him, excited him, repelled him like faces of strangers in a crowd—this world was suddenly scattered like clouds scurrying across the sky on a stormy day. He was a boy again, fair-haired little Peter, on the farmstead in Latvia, in the room with the low ceiling, and his mother was feeding him with her warm, light hands.

As if accidentally passing by, somebody stopped beside Zupans and put something into his pocket. After a moment, others followed his example, murmuring vague words of sympathy; it was always like that. Zupans went scarlet with shame, drew in his head and hunched up his shoulders. He wished he could sink through the floor.

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"Another plate?" the woman asked.

"No," he said hoarsely. "Please, let's go. Let's get away from here."

Again he felt wet snowflakes on his face. A subdued, sleepy crowd was still moving about, still splashing through the mud in the large station building which had neither roof nor floor. A chill wind roared imperiously among the ruins as if resenting the presence of human beings in this wilderness of collapsed walls, solitary chimneystacks and heaps of rusty iron. Now and then, quick footsteps passed by, making for a definite destination close at hand. A conductor's whistle blew shrilly; voices raised in warning were swallowed up in the dank foggy air and falling snow. An electric engine droned dully and, gliding away as smoothly as a sledge, fell silent. But people were still trudging through the mud; it sounded as if convicts were taking their prescribed walk in the yard of their prison. Perhaps they were people who had to wait a long time for their train, or perhaps they knew that their train would never come or that it had gone long ago.

They walked a few paces, and stopped. Zupans turned to his companion and found himself so close to her that he could feel her warm breath on his face.

"Please, put my glasses on for me."

"It is dark here," she said. "We are standing in the shadow of a wall."

"Never mind," Zupans insisted. "Put them on."

Did he not want her to see his empty eye-sockets without their protective covering of black glass? No, he probably was not thinking of that, but perhaps he wanted her to go on doing things for him.

"Are you going home now?" he asked.

"No, not yet."

"What more do you want to do?"

"I've already told you. I want to help. I have plenty of time."

Zupans sharply drew in the cold air. He spoke in a low, constrained voice, but it seemed to him he was shouting.

"That isn't true!"

She did not reply, but neither did she turn away. Zupans could still feel her warm, light breath.

"That isn't true," he panted. "How can you help me? You can only humiliate me. That's what you call helping, you and the

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others. There was a time when I was grateful, but I'm not any longer. I've had enough of it. Leave me alone. How can you know! You'd better go home. Please go!"

There was a tightness in his throat. He felt the woman's breasts heaving as she drew breath, and he suddenly clasped her in his crippled arms. Roughly, violently, he held on to her as if she were a tree, and with a convulsive movement he buried his face between her neck and shoulder. He remembered what the invalid in the restaurant had said about the girl. Perhaps he was right: after all, he had seen her.

"If you really wanted to . . ." Zupans whispered hoarsely. The raw air suddenly chilled him, he shivered. "If you didn't merely want to humiliate me you would understand that all this doesn't really matter. I can do almost everything myself, and there's always someone willing to help. So, you see, it doesn't really matter. People help me, and they think it would be better for everybody, and for myself, if I died. Perhaps you also think it would have been better if I'd been killed in this accident. But if you really wanted to . . ." His teeth bit into the soft cloth of her collar, and some moments passed before he was able to continue. "You'd do something else. But you won't do it. No woman will ever do it, you won't either."

"What do you want?" Her voice was as gentle as before.

"Nothing. Or yourself."

She leaned lightly against a dilapidated brick wall. Zupans touched it with the sensitive tips of his short arms; it was cold, rough and wet. Heavy drops of water occasionally dripped from above their heads. His cheek touched her hair; there were snowflakes clinging to it, but her neck was almost hot.

She said nothing, but she did not shrink from his touch, his importunate breath and naked words. Perhaps she tolerated him because it was dark where they stood. But perhaps . . . Zupans' thoughts reeled, and he continued hastily, in jerks, clutching her with his crippled arms.

"You can't imagine what it is like when a man gets nothing but pity from a woman. If you can't love me, hit me, it won't hurt. But if you could . . ." She made a faint movement, and Zupans went on hurriedly, not letting her speak. "Listen . . . We are alone, nobody can hear us. Two people in the dark can speak frankly, can't they. I know what you are, it isn't difficult to guess. We met

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at the station. You have nothing in particular to do, you say you have plenty of time. You are one of those girls who go to the station at night, to be in a crowd, to forget their loneliness and poverty, to strike up an acquaintance with some man they fancy. You like chocolate and American cigarettes, don't you. No doubt you speak a few words of English. Listen . . . I'm neither tall nor handsome, but the night is dark. I've got some chocolate, and there must be cigarettes in my left-hand pocket. I've got money in the right-hand pocket, a lot of money. It's a magical pocket, it never grows empty. When I have to pay for something I say: Please, help yourself, take it out of my pocket. But everybody puts in more than he takes out. I tell you, it's a magical pocket, always full of money and food coupons. I'll give you everything I have in that pocket . . ."

He stopped, out of breath. A young couple passed them, laughing. There was a sensuous ring in the girl's laughter, she cooed like a dove; the man joined in, softly and happily. Oh how Zupans hated those two who could laugh as if they were the only people in the world.

"No," the woman answered in her smooth, quiet voice. "You are mistaken. I am not one of those girls."

He slowly drew back his arms. The young couple's happy voices rang out again. In this night, and in this place, their laughter was as incongruous as cornflowers blossoming in the snow.

"Forgive me," Zupans said at last, trying to keep his voice steady. "Of course, of course. How stupid of me. I ought to have known. Your clothes don't smell of cheap scent, you haven't got any powder on your face . . . You're going now, aren't you? Surely you're going?"

"I didn't say so."

"Then . . . perhaps . . ."

"Let's not stand here. You are cold."

"No. I'm not going anywhere till you answer me. I must know. Yes or no?"

This time she hesitated. Finally she said: "No."

Then she added: "I don't know. Come. Let's go where it is warmer. I'm also beginning to feel cold."

Zupans understood. He rapidly sobered down and regretted all he had said. Doesn't one know how irksome an ill-tempered, pretentious cripple can be, he thought. Hasn't she been kind enough

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already? Charity has its limits. He lost interest in the whole conversation and tried to speak as evenly and politely as she did.

"Where shall we go? I'm not cold. I can spend the night in the waiting-room or somewhere among the ruins, away from the wind. It isn't really very cold."

"No, you can't do that. I'd take you home with me, but I don't live here. Wait a moment . . . I know a place where they let rooms." She spoke calmly and reasonably, as though she had not heard what he had said, whined, shouted in the dark. "I don't know whether they'll have a room left. But we can try."

"Is it far?"

"Yes. But we'll go by tram."

All right, let us go, Zupans thought. Why shouldn't I go. All I have to do is wait until she is bored with the whole situation.

They entered the square in front of the station. Most of the movement had ceased, and the asphalt was covered with a layer of wet snow. Zupans was tired and walked slowly, dragging his feet. His toes were numb with cold, and his joints felt stiff. The tips of his arms were beginning to hurt; he did not speak because he did not want his companion to hear how his teeth knocked together.

They stood for a while in the large, windswept square, then the tram came. "We are lucky," she said. "That is the last one." She grasped Zupans by the elbow and helped him in.

The carriage was crowded with tired, sleepy people in damp clothes. The woman paid for the tickets; somebody got up and offered Zupans his seat. He sat down; the seat was still warm. She stood before him in the narrow passage. The tram swayed, sometimes their knees met, sometimes she bent over him and he felt her coat brushing his face. He was so tired that he could scarcely think, but he did not feel sleepy.

The conductor monotonously called out stop after stop, and the tram continued on its way, deeper and deeper into the desert of ruins. The motor panted, dragging the heavy load uphill. Gradually the carriage became emptier, and she sat down beside Zupans. He felt her close to him, but it was like the touch of a stranger, meaningless, unfamiliar.

"We'll soon be there," she said softly, but the conductor went on calling out the names of streets as the tram moved along a straight, smooth road. Zupans sat and rubbed the tips of his arms against each other.

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"We've arrived." She rose, and when they had left the warmth of the carriage and there was nothing but silence, wind, and falling snow, she took Zupans' arm. They walked in step as though they were accustomed to walking together. At first she warned him when they had to cross a street or when the pavement was uneven; but she soon realized that this was unnecessary while she held his elbow. He obeyed the slightest movement of her hand, she could guide him almost by her thoughts alone. They walked in silence.

At last the woman stopped by a door and rang the bell. For a long time, there was no response. They are all asleep, Zupans thought. It is night.

"There's a light above the door," she said. "Someone is coming."

Slow footsteps approached the door. A dull old voice asked: "Who is there?"

"Please open."

Zupans felt a wave of warm air strike his face.

"Do you happen to have a room for the night?" the woman asked.

The old voice was distinctly unfriendly. "No, full up. Who sent you? Have you been to the office at the station, have you got a permit for a night's lodging? In any case, everything is booked for a week ahead." The creaking door began to close.

"Surely you won't leave us in the street? My husband . . ."

The door remained half open. A silence came from the doorstep, the silence which always spread around Zupans like a magic circle. The woman held his elbow. Her light hand was firm and reassuring.

"Good God!" The voice by the door was changed beyond recognition. "Prisoner-of-war?"

"Yes," said the calm voice close to Zupans' shoulder. "From Russia. Just returned. I fetched him from the station. We live at Ahlen, the last train is gone. I'd have got a permit, but the office was already shut. Please let him stay the night."

"Really, I don't know where to put you," the voice by the door said doubtfully. "But come in. I'll see what I can do."

They waited in the warm hall which smelt of beer and cheap fuel. The old woman mounted the stairs to the floor above. Behind a door, probably in the kitchen, somebody was washing

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dishes. Zupans reflected for a while; his fatigue had suddenly left him. Finally he asked in a low voice:

"Why are you doing this?"

"It is the only way. Don't talk now."

The heavy footsteps returned and passed them; then there was the sound of fat, clumsy fingers turning the pages of a book.

"Your name, please."

He answered: "Peter Zupans."

"And your wife's Christian name?"

"Helga," she said quickly.

"Peter . . . Helga . . . Zupans," the old woman wrote, spelling it out. "You can fill up the registration form tomorrow, Mrs. Zupans. I have prepared my daughter's room for you. She is in Heidelberg and won't be back until after tomorrow."

"Thank you very much."

Upstairs, the landlady ushered them into a cool room. There was a smell of fresh linen and floor polish.

"There's only the one bed," she said. "But after such a long separation . . ." A little chuckle crept into her voice. She quickly suppressed it, and continued with a sigh: "Yes, this terrible war! We all have to bear our burden, each in his own way. I still have no news of my son . . . Is there anything else you wish?"

"No, thank you."

"Good night."

They were alone in the room.

She went across to the bed, turned the sheet down and arranged the pillows. Zupans heard her movements so distinctly that he almost imagined he could see her. On the other side of the wall, a wireless was playing some popular old-fashioned dance tunes, probably Viennese waltzes. Zupans had never been able to distinguish one Viennese waltz from another. Light footsteps passed along the corridor, followed by a heavier tread. A key turned in a lock, a door opened and shut.

"Come, I'll help you to undress."

Zupans sat down on the edge of the bed. He knew that the light shone full in his face; he bit his teeth together, to stop the trembling in his cheeks. It's no use saying anything, he thought. Let her do what she likes.

Again he felt the touch of her light, nimble hands as she pulled his boots off, removed his glasses, and began to undress him. He

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tried to imagine that he was still at the hospital and that it was the nurse who attended to him. But the touch of those gentle hands sent his thoughts into a painful whirl.

"Please tell me now—why are you doing all this?"

She immediately replied in her smooth, clear voice:

"I couldn't have done otherwise. You wouldn't have got a room anywhere tonight. You speak German very well, but even so one can tell you are a foreigner. That makes all the difference. You would always be turned away, certainly at night."

"But, to you, it makes no difference?"

"No, not to me."

"Of course, you don't have to let rooms!"

He instantly regretted his words.

"What are you going to do now?" he asked after a while.

"Oh, nothing in particular. There's a big chair. I'll sit here for a few hours. It will soon be day. I'm not tired. Don't worry, go to sleep."

"I have met all sorts of people, good and bad," Zupans said, "and I always understood them. With you, it is different—I cannot understand you at all. You helped me, you wasted your time on me, you put up with my insults, and finally you even pretended to be my wife. This evening you have done more for me than anyone has ever done. But I cannot thank you. I want nothing from you if you persist in remaining a stranger to me. You only hurt and humiliate me with everything you do. I told you so, but you don't seem to understand. With all your charity, you are the most hard-hearted, cruel woman I've ever met. No doubt you think I'm ungrateful. But how could I feel gratitude? I hate you. If only you knew how I hate you, with all your airs and graces, your pity and charity! I'd much rather sleep among the ruins than in a bed prepared by you!"

She said nothing. The boarding-house gradually fell silent. The wireless was switched off behind the wall, and the only sound that remained was the slow, calm ticking of a large clock. Thus ends my journey into life, Zupans thought. Tomorrow I shall have to return to the nursing-home. There is no alternative. But he no longer cared.

"Why should you be cold all night, sitting on that chair," he said. "The bed is wide enough for two. You needn't be afraid. As far as you are concerned, I'm not a man—I'm merely a cripple."

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For a moment there was silence; then she said: "All right." But Zupans did not hear her. He had turned over; his teeth biting into the pillow, he lay as though in a bed of nettles, and yet he had not slept in anything so soft and warm for three or four years. He did not hear her undressing and switching off the light. When she lay down beside him he moved as close to the wall as he possibly could.

She put her soft, warm arms round his neck and drew him slowly towards herself. "Poor boy," she said. "My poor boy. What a child you are. Oh, what a child you are." Her arms held his thin, trembling shoulders which suddenly broke into perspiration. He was so emaciated and light, she scarcely felt his weight.

As a song seems long to the singer and short to the listener, and only those who do not listen to it can tell its length, the moments which followed seemed short to her but infinitely long to him, and they brought one of those sudden transformations which are unfathomable and yet extremely simple. A barrier of humiliation, torment, hostility had stood between them, and now it had vanished, and the dark was suffused with a warm glow which rose from the very depth of their hearts. Something painful and evil, an illness of the soul, had passed; a storm of conflicting impressions, feelings and thoughts had abated. Only they themselves remained, and they had no need of anything.

What they had found was very much less than love, but perhaps it was simpler and truer than what is sometimes called love. It was what a sailor finds in the arms of a cheap unknown girl, something that enables him to forget the terrors of the sea, his loneliness and hardships. It was the same that helps a poverty-stricken man and wife, who have left their dreams of love far behind them with the years, to mitigate their hunger and the nightly despair. Maybe there was something in it of what soothes a child's pain when his mother fondles him on her lap. Perhaps it was the victory of two people over loneliness.

For a long time they lay motionless, so close to each other that it was not necessary to speak. She might have remained silent until the morning, but he soon felt compelled to think. His calm, clear thoughts revolved around what had just happened.

She must be unhappy, Zupans thought. She must be as unhappy as I am, otherwise she couldn't have acted as she did. What is her

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sorrow? He knew by her voice and movements that she was young. She may be deformed as I am myself, he thought, she may be hunch-backed or pock-marked, perhaps she has a hare-lip. Such trifles, what do they matter! I don't care if she is not like other girls, as long as she is mine. I will stroke her crippled back, I will kiss her scars and her hare-lip, her deformities will be my own. God knows I am not afraid of such things, no, not I! Her defects only bring her closer to me. I must tell her and reassure her.

Perhaps there still was darkness and night somewhere, but in his heart everything had become clear and bright. Yet he could not see the woman he held in his arms, and he longed to raise her also into his new-found light. He began to explore her body which was so close to him and yet quite unknown. Slowly, bashfully, haltingly, he touched her. She understood that he wanted to see her, as she had from the very beginning understood his every word and action, and she did not resist. The more of her body Zupans raised out of the dark with the touch of his knees, his elbows, the tips of his arms, the more he was overcome by surprise and wonder.

He discovered straight, long legs, softly rounded hips, a smooth slender middle and cool, firm, young breasts. Every part of her body was vigorous, well proportioned and faultless. He was at a loss to understand. Impatiently, he reached for her face—there, surely, lay the key to the riddle. The tips of his arms were not sensitive enough, and he explored her face with his lips, gently as a dog sniffs the face of a sleeping child.

He felt smooth, soft skin, a small mouth with hot lips, a straight nose, and the more he discovered the more his conviction grew in spite of the night and the darkness of his eyes that this girl's face and body were flawless and beautiful. His lips touched her eye-lids; they were wet, and tears flowed in two silent streams across her temples and into her hair. Zupans remembered the small soft tremor in her breast when she had first embraced him, and now he knew that she had been crying all the time he had held her in his arms.

Zupans raised his head and remained motionless for a while. Then he pressed his trembling lips against her shoulder. He was slowly slipping back into his former loneliness. If only she had been ugly, crippled or old, she might perhaps have stayed with him. But this girl was young and beautiful. His unreasonable mo-

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mentary hope faded and died away. The girl had no power to alter his fate, and that was why she cried. He was grateful to her for this moment and for these tears.

"Tomorrow," he whispered, "tomorrow you'll leave me, Helga, because you are young and beautiful. The morning is already approaching. Never mind. Don't cry. I am strong enough now to live and to hope. I shall always think of you, and I shall be strong and rich for a long time to come."

There was a new gentleness in her voice when she replied, but she spoke as calmly as she had always done. Her tears were not audible.

"I don't think I shall ever leave you, Peter, unless you want me to go. I feel that we shall always remain together."

He slowly shook his head in the dark. "I can't believe it."

"Why not?"

"Because . . ." he began. "Because . . . . . ." But he got no further, he fell silent. Helga's hand quietly stroked his hair.

"Can you explain it to me?" he asked after a silence which had lasted a quarter of an hour, maybe, or a full hour. During that time, light and darkness had flashed through his mind with every breath he took, chasing each other, blotting each other out, as a dark room is suddenly lit up and plunged back into night by cars passing the house in rapid succession. "I don't understand anything yet."

"But it is so simple!"

They spoke slowly, at intervals. Sometimes a question was answered immediately, sometimes after a long pause. They were preoccupied with their own thoughts. Sometimes the silence spoke for them.

"What are we going to do?"

"You'll come home with me. My sister has a small apartment at Ahlen. We'll have our own room."

"What will she say when you bring me?"

"Nothing. What can she say. Her husband is an invalid, too."

Silence.

"I still can't understand it."

"You'll get used to the idea."

"Yes, but . . ." He sat up. "I want to know, so that I can believe it isn't just . . . I want to know everything."

"Well, what exactly?"

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"What were you doing outside the station when we . . . met?"

"I was going to catch a train."

"And you didn't go?"

"I didn't go. The last train for Ahlen left when we were at the restaurant."

A long silence.

"Tell me, have you lost somebody in the war?"

"Yes."

"He was killed?"

"Yes."

Silence.

"When did you decide to stay with me? Just now? Here?"

She hesitated. "No. Earlier."

"When?"

"I . . . I don't quite know. Perhaps it was when I saw you among the cars, surrounded by people. No, I don't think it was then, no, not yet. But when I saw you I thought: Oh God, if only the one I lost had come back—even if he had come back—like you."

Silence.

"And then?"

"Then you lied to me, you said you had a fiancée, and I knew you were all alone in the world. And then the soldier at our table kept looking at us. He was an invalid, too. When he left he stroked my hair. I had never seen him before."

Silence.

"And at that moment you decided?"

"Yes . . . No, not then. But I was already thinking of it. No, it was later, when we were standing by the wall. When you asked me, and I said: No. At that moment a girl went by with an invalid. One sees so many of them in town these days . . . He had no hands, just like you. She had put her arm around him, and she laughed. He looked so happy! He had forgotten that he had no hands, and he laughed for joy because he had a girl who put her arm around him. Then I told you that I didn't know. But I knew already."

This time there was a long silence. The night was drawing to an end. Now and then, the footsteps of men going to their early work passed along the street, and the morning followed softly upon their heels.

Another hour went by, and they were still wide awake. When

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Zupans finally spoke, his voice had changed. It was as calm and clear as hers.

"Shall we get married?"

"Yes," she said. "I think it would be better."

After a while she asked: "Peter, what are you thinking about?"

Perhaps he had not yet fully developed his thought. But he said: "I never knew that a woman could be so strong and so good—as you are."

She laughed softly. "I'll need strength, for both of us!"

The house gradually filled with the sounds of morning. Feet hurried upstairs, downstairs, past their door, along the passage. A tap was turned on, water splashed, the wireless began to play behind the wall. Cars sounded their horns in the street.

"Helga, I can't sleep," Zupans said. "It is daylight. I know it is daylight. I want to get up."

"What do you want to do? It is early."

"I'd like to go to the window. Come with me."

They stood at the window. "Tell me what kind of day it is."

She looked out and spoke quietly as though thinking aloud.

"The wind has died down. It seems to be freezing outside. We are high up here. The air is clear, and we can see the town far away on the hillside. All the rubble is covered with snow, everything is white, clean and peaceful. A bluish mist is rising from the Neckar."

He stood by her side, a little behind her, his right arm around her waist, his head on her shoulder.

"A bluish mist is rising from the Neckar," he said. "The town lies enveloped in Sunday peace, and the sky is full of wintry radiance. Columns of white smoke thread their way upwards from the valley, and a multitude of cars glide soundlessly through the streets. The sun is climbing the eastern hill-tops, windows and snow-covered roofs sparkle with rosy brilliance."

"How do you know?" she asked.

"I see it," he said.

Helga glanced at his face.

"You see it?"

"Yes," he answered, smiling. "I see it—with your eyes or with mine, what does it matter!"

[*Translated from the Latvian by Ruth Speirs*]

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MAXINE W. KUMIN

For Anne At Passover

I

Cold Easter week and the hard buds, forming, shake
their miter caps at me. The tower bells
sing Christly sweet, and everywhere
new scents—honey and blood—work the air.

My students, outside the college halls, regroup,
share notes and smoke. Coats open; no hats, no gloves.
Some metabolic principle
keeps them warm enough until the bell;
or love. Or thoughts of going home. Time now,
we mind the syllabus which juxtaposes
Socrates, inviting the poison cup,
saying, *there is no fear that it will stop*
with me, and Jesus, apportioning His week
however accidentally, with our Greek.

A kind of water-walking, Socrates
goes barefoot and uncaring over ice,
stands tranced through two dawns, is able
to drink all comers underneath the table
and takes no lover in his night
except philosophy, *that dear delight.*

In air heavy as damask roses, we read
the prison scene together. The weather abets us
and a great pocking rain commences.
We smell resurgence prickling our senses;

Son and sage hear voices. They keep no books,
but loose disciples on the world to tell
their missions, miracles and choices;
in Christ's name, Joan burns for her voices.
In Christ's name shunned, historic news,
the Jews their own stoned Jew refuse.

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And Socrates, messiah true or false,
how might the Christ have come to take our sin
without you, *terribly at ease in Zion?*
You die now, for no man, and in no pain,
bathed and bedded according to the fashion,
friends who see you out your only Passion;
no nails, excepting as the soul is hung
against the flesh till death unfasten it.
One student says you sinned the sin of pride.
Another consecrates your suicide.

I say myths knit the world up when men die
for love; and if they lie, love needs the lie.
Time now. In Holy week, the tower bell
returns us to a faithful Friday rain.
Baggage and books, my students move about,
wish me happy Easter, and go out.

II

Home by subway, I dare to see
my eye stare in my eye
and black it out;
and see my head, which best of all
I thought I knew,
elongate, squash or disengage
itself; swim off and leave
my motiveless shoulders
lost in doubt.

Still, I get out
uptown, as decorous as the next,
feel useful in the buildings
out of habit;
peer through a window
at fat chocolate rabbits
and price madonna lilies
and buy an egg
with a crystal candy scene
sweetly inside—a peephole
for the eye of a child—

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and look before I eat
and put up my umbrella
in the three o'clock street.

They have unpinned Him in the rain.
Cabs spin from St. Philip's
and cars unpark
and I walk where disbelief
clacks at my soul,
an old god in my pocket
worrying the hole;
now all the saving bells begin.
I could not make Him to unmake my sin.

III

Tonight, the damask cloth laid, the loving cup
brimmed with sweet wine, I think of those my kin
who sat that Friday, inviting Elijah in
and swore he never came, nor comes again.
I think of Judas, the prophecy fetched up
to truth at our mutual season: yours to take
your pierced and honored Son out of His cave
and sing *resurgam,* drink His winey life;
there at the rail for pity's sake
redeem yourself, all men, as if
there were still time in this hard budding time;
and mine to mind another book: remind
my blood relations we are marked in the blood
of an earlier lamb and call God good
Who thumped our Moses so to send us out
and turned aside and hardened Pharaoh's heart
ten times, Antagonist! to put
us on that dusty pathway through
Your hot sea. So we come to praise You.

Yearly, the youngest child, asking why
this night is different from all other nights,
is told, his soft mouth crammed with bittersweet,
the bondage years in Egypt, and in some way
learns to perpetuate them from that day.

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I remember my father's mother boiled
chickens with their feet on, and we ate,
blaspheming modern children, from her plate
both meat and milk and stayed up loved and late,
no letter law applying to a child.
I have sealed her in me, her fierce love
of kindred all she had to give
and my drowned Polish ancestry
washed out of Europe, rises up in me.

We pray tonight, dip herbs and pour out wine,
forever what we are. I hear the rain
swelling the hard buds; all our fetiches
the simple sum of promises or wishes:
a radioactive rain in Pakistan
and Haifa, Yucca Flats, the Vatican,
on all my kind; Manhattan rich
or Yemen poor who break hard bread
tonight, and bless their unforgotten dead.

What do we do, who eat to celebrate
with Eucharist and matzoh man's old fate?
I take a funny comfort, reading how
Bakongo folk, hard on the pulsing spew
of the afterbirth, would kiss that cord
and fix it in the belly of their god
so that its navel bud protrudes
where we are, mewling, swathed to hold
our secret in. We die, that knob unsealed.

Now God forgive us where we live
the ways we love are relative.
Yours, Anne, the sacramental arts
which divide Him in three parts;
mine, the vengeful King of pride
despite Whose arm His chosen died;
theirs, the unction and the fuss
who bless the lost umbilicus.

Guests of our glands, slaves to our origins,
we pray and eat tonight in greening weather.
Time swells the buds. A sharper rain begins;
we are all babes who suck at love together.

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Eleventh Century Doors

Busch Reisinger Museum, Cambridge, Mass.

Eleven hundred years since Christ
Put on His nails and swam to God
And I am almost twice again in time
Since these cathedral doors were cast
In thirty-five bronze squares. Sweet Christ,
Unarticulated limbs bent to
The cross, is shown four times over,
Stiff as a child might draw and no better
Sidewise, lumpish, out of scale.
Two rows above His thorns, six adders;
Three tempting Eve, thickened esses,
And three endangering early saints.

Nothing moves. The forms are rudiments
And I will not be moved, except
Here in the center by a centaur,
Armless but manheaded; eyeless,
Pure Greek among the miracles
A reasonable critique. And more:
A sejant lion with a splendid tail,
Wide-maned, narrow-hipped, and smiling.
Why does the archaic lion smile?
What is the lion, what is the myth
Doing on the Rhine? Let these pit
The truth; Christ, let these be mine.

Reading downward, square by square
The stone rolls from the cold cave's mouth.
Christ rises, the holes healed, the eyes
Raised, and a nimbus around His head.
Almost, the doors swing out and open,
Almost, the homagers sweep in
Over the scoop-worn threshold
Under the archway formed on the right
By the full-size Church, naked and nubile,
A giantess of grace, offering praises,
And on the left by the form-draped damned,
Eyes bound, hands fettered, the Synagogue.

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Jesus
in this
century you were so loved that
a Jew outside the pale would have
his belly slit and a live cat
sewn up in it

Mother of God
in Virginia
Crevecoeur came on a tree to which
a thieving slave had been attached
so that vultures might peck his eyeballs out
and maggots work in his living flesh

Yesterday
in Korea
a G. I. lusting to invent
rewards nailed up a skinny yellow man
and flew that boxed and breathing coffin
by helicopter south to purgatory

Well, these are history.
The story is the joke of love;
I mean, the deeds of love
Man can perform with intricate perversion.
As with snakes, as with divine assumption.
I mean, the fascination of
The crucifix is with us still,
Making room again and again
For one more ingenuity.
And I do well to fasten on
The fable in the center of the doors.
I will not have Christ tricked with my cruelty.

Your Living Head

Out of a lonely place I call
to you, walk back with me
and far off, turning, wake to feel
the hard bones of your sleep

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this wall of you, free of your self
and mine—or almost true
if sleep set free. Women have lain
all night with corpses, I have heard,
and raised awake at morning to
cold stone on their flanks
so fleetly death can slip
invention in. I close on your breath,
a mild feast, faintly sour,
tasting your last cigarette
and acid of your dream.
Nothing you know, the kiss
hangs loose about your mouth.
Woman I am to see you first
outflung, I damn the dead man
you will be, the dead that we
will be.
From a lonely place
of loss I stare the black waves down
willing the night away
until distinctions build
your living head
between me and the day.

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PATRICK CRUTTWELL

Pope and His Church

ALTHOUGH, OF COURSE, much has been written of Pope's opinions philosophical and religious, there seems a curious reluctance to engage with the simple question: what did his membership in the Roman Catholic Church really mean to his mind? It may be that the question has tended to be shelved because from a reading of his works it did not seem to arise: and that is true, on the surface. But the mere fact that it does not arise is surely remarkable. For Pope's writings included on the one hand works which purport to be—and really are—directly personal, and on the other hand works which expound philosophical doctrines about God and Man and the Universe. From such works a virtual exclusion of one's nominal faith is surely odd. And yet a not inattentive reader, who did not happen to know that Pope was a member of a Catholic family and himself remained a Catholic all his life, could scan his writings and hardly be able to guess it. Simple concealment was not the motive, since Pope's Catholicism was universally known and frequently used by his Grub Street enemies in their attacks upon him. And, in fact, the problem involves more than a mere leaving-out; certain passages in one work (the *Essay on Criticism*) and the overall tendency of another (the *Essay on Man*) were regarded by many of his fellow-Catholics as positively anti-Catholic.

For Pope, as for all Catholics in a country which was largely non-Catholic and largely hostile to Catholicism, membership in his Church could not be simply the holding of certain opinions and the performance of certain duties. It had social implications as well—social and personal. It put him in a specific situation in his society, which he might not have wanted to be put in—he did not, in fact—but which he could not entirely escape. In the England of the early eighteenth century, the temperature of religious controversy was a good deal lower than it had been; persecution (from both sides) was considerably milder; what the Catholic—and also, of course, the Nonconformist—now had to face were disabilities rather than dangers. He was no longer regarded as a certain enemy of the State. He was still regarded as a potential

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enemy: and this in particular when the Jacobites were on the war-path, for it was probably true that the majority of English Catholics were still at least passive Jacobites and that all the more clerical and zealous among them were more than passive. But Pope had no such leanings. He was not in the least inclined to go with his co-religionists in anything *but* religion; on the contrary, it was one of the cardinal points of his whole life to keep himself free from the trammels of politics ("while Tories call me Whig and Whigs a Tory"), and therefore we find him, whenever a Jacobite scare was on, careful to disengage himself from the opinions which others might expect to be implied in his religion. As he wrote to Sir William Trumbull when the rising of 1715 was in the air:

> I heartily join with you in wishing Quiet to our native country: Quiet in the state, which like charity in religion, is too much the perfection and happiness of either, to be broken or violated on any pretext whatsoever: Fire and sword, and fire and faggot are equally my aversion. I can pray for opposite parties, and for opposite religions, with great sincerity.[1]

Such disengagement, on the political plane, was not very difficult; it was even easier for Pope than for others because of the physical disabilities which in any case would have kept him out of the active arena, and in fact he found his Catholicism, in this respect, rather useful than otherwise. It supplied him with another excuse for not being involved. But a much more intractable and subtler problem was posed him by the whole intellectual climate of the age he lived in and was part of. In that age, the intellectual prestige of English Catholicism was probably lower than in any other age before or since. Catholicism was totally repudiated by the spirit of "progressive" Deist rationalism, which worked on many more persons than those who were Deists avowed. That spirit was anti-clerical and anti-mystical, and it looked on the Church of Rome as the most priest-ridden and the most superstitious of all the Churches. And that Church was compromised also by being regarded as the Church, above all churches, of the Middle Ages, and by sharing thereby in the general contempt for all things medieval. And, worst of all, it had no intellectual champions of any distinction whatsoever. It is hard to call to mind a single English Catholic of the eighteenth century whom Pope him-

[1] Letter of 16 December 1715. All my quotations from Pope's letters are taken from the Sherburn edition of his correspondence.

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self could or would have accepted as his peer in the realm of cultural achievement; certainly there was none remotely comparable with More in an earlier age or with Newman and Hopkins in a later.

This alone would have been awkward enough, had Pope himself been opposed to the spirit of his age. But the awkwardness, in that case, would at least have been simple. Athanasius *contra mundum* may feel lonely, but he is sure he is right. In fact, however, Pope was very far from opposed to the spirit of his age. He shared in it wholeheartedly; he contributed to make it. He was strongly tinged with its anti-clerical progressiveness; he was much inclined to view orthodox theology with contempt and "natural religion" with approval; he was entirely in agreement with dismissing the Middle Ages as irrevocably Dark. All the men whom he worked with most closely, whose minds he looked on as the peers or superiors of his own, were unbelievers like Bolingbroke or Protestants like Arbuthnot, Atterbury, and Swift. And friendship—which for him included intellectual and spiritual harmony —meant a very great deal to Pope; it was probably the strongest emotional nexus of his life, debarred as he was from marriage and probably from sex. What he said on his deathbed, as Spence tells us—"There is nothing that is meritorious but virtue and friendship; and indeed friendship itself is only a part of virtue"—was something he had experienced profoundly. As much as with any writer, Pope's intellectual and spiritual life was bound up with his personal; as close to his heart as any vision was his vision of himself as one of a small and intimate group of equals, the men of goodwill and good sense who stood against the horde of the Dunces. All the ideas he cogitated and the ideals he formed were embodied for his mind in certain loved individuals—some of whom, such as Bolingbroke, his imagination seems to have made into creatures very different from the realities. For his happiness, it was of desperate importance to keep the intellectual respect, as well as the affection, of men such as these; and yet, if he intended to remain a Catholic—and he did intend to—he had to keep their respect together with adherence to a Church which he knew they regarded at best with tolerant contempt, at worst with aversion: and the motives, the criteria, by which they adopted that attitude were such as he himself very largely agreed with. He would never have become a Catholic, had he not been born one.

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It was not an easy problem for him, nor is it altogether easy for us to see how and how far he solved it. His letters may give us some hints. It is quickly noticeable that his tone in them varies widely, when he is writing of his religion, according to whether his correspondent is or is not a Catholic. When he is writing love-letters (or, at least, exercises in verbal gallantry) to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the tone is one of ironic apology; his religion is presented as something to be appropriately included in the deliberate exaggeration, the whimsy which is not meant to be taken as serious, of such flirtations by post. He writes of it, then, like this:

> In a word, no one can have you more constantly in Mind, not even your Guardian Angel, (if you have one) and I am willing to indulge so much Popery as to imagine, some Being takes care of you.
>
> Unless you write to me, my wishes must be but like a poor Papist's Devotions to seperate Spirits; who, for all they know or hear from them, either may or may not be sensible of their Addresses.
>
> The more I examine my own mind, the more Romantick I find myself. . . . Tis a generous piece of Popery that pursues even those who are to be Eternally absent into another world; let it be right or wrong, the very Extravagance is a sort of Piety.[2]

"Popery" is "romantick"; and "romantick" in the early eighteenth century meant that which was appropriate to romances: unreal, fanciful, extravagant, not to be subjected to the strict enquiries of reason. Only to be believed in by a "poor Papist"—and yet Pope himself was the "poor Papist," saying to his mistress, in effect: "When I am silly enough to adore you, I am silly enough also to believe in angels and saints and prayers for the dead"—and is he implying—the tone would incline one to think so—that when he is not in the state of "romantick" silliness, he does *not* believe in such things? The degree of serious belief, if there is any, is left uncertain. That, perhaps, may be due to the self-defensive guardedness of one who is writing to a correspondent who he knows will not sympathise; but there is something very like it in a letter to a fellow-Catholic concerning the defenders of Barcelona in 1714:

> They say the inhabitants expect Angels from heaven to their assistance. May I venture to say, who am a *Papist,* and to say to you who are a *Papist,* that nothing is more astonishing to me, than that people so greatly warm'd with a sense of Liberty, should be capable

[2] 20 August 1716; 16 October 1716; 10 November 1716.

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> of harbouring such weak Superstitions, and that so much bravery and so much folly, can inhabit the same breasts?[3]

The assumption behind this is clearly that those who are "warm'd with a sense of liberty" should not be—should not be expected to be—"superstitious" also. The former is what you expect of our enlightened eighteenth century; the latter is what you expect of the benighted Middle Ages. Both assumptions are completely Augustan. This attitude to "Popery" is very close to that of the slightly later cult of the "Gothick." When Mrs. Delany, in 1768, visited the house of a famous "Gothiciser," Mr. Bateman's at Windsor, she commented on the tiny chapel which he had designed "within his dressing-room." It was, she says, "an exact representation of a popish chapel expensively decorated." "There are many crucifixes in it, ivory figures of saints, crowns, and crosses set with sapphire, a little case called the treasury filled with rosaries, crosses, and a thousand things relating to ceremonies that I don't understand." Horace Walpole had the same viewpoint. "I like Popery," he writes to the Reverend William Cole, "as well as you, and have shown I do. I like it as I like chivalry and romance. They all furnish one with ideas and visions which presbyterianism does not. A Gothic church or a convent fills one with romantic dreams . . ." On Bateman and his house, Mrs. Delany makes the radical criticism of all the Gothick cult: she points to the fact that it was purely superficial, literally "picturesque," with no relationship to the real beliefs which had filled the real thing. "For if he does *not* make use of the chapel in *good earnest,* his making a joke of it is *shocking.*" It is not surprising to find this in men like Bateman and Walpole, who were not Catholics—who were dubiously Christians at all, in any serious sense—but it *is* odd to find it in Pope.[4]

What is emerging from this is a degree of uneasiness in Pope's mind between his modern assumptions, the assumptions of the Enlightenment, and his ancient faith. He was aware of a certain ambiguity in his personal position; he remarked on it to another Catholic correspondent (Martha Blount). "Everyone values Mr. Pope," he observes, "but every one for a different reason. One for

[3] To Edward Blount, 27 August 1714.

[4] Mrs. Delany is writing to her sister on 10 October 1768 (see *Mrs. Delany,* edited by R. Brimley Johnson, 1925). Horace Walpole to Cole, 12 July 1778.

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his firm adherence to the Catholic Faith, another for his Neglect of Popish Superstitions."[5] This ambiguity came to the forefront in his first open disagreement with his co-religionists, concerning a passage in the *Essay on Criticism*. The passage complained of was this:

> Learning and Rome alike in Empire grew,
> And arts still flourished where her eagles flew;
> From the same foes, at last, both felt their doom,
> And the same age saw learning fall, and Rome.
> With tyranny, then superstition joined,
> As that the body, this enslaved the mind.
> Much was believed, but little understood,
> And to be dull was construed to be good.
> A second deluge learning thus o'er-run,
> And the monks finished what the Goths begun.
> At length Erasmus, that great injured name,
> (The glory of the priesthood and the shame!)
> Stemmed the wild torrent of a barb'rous age,
> And drove those holy Vandals off the stage.
>
> *(681-696)*

In the opinions which this expresses, there was nothing at all original. Its view of the past—Greco-Roman light, medieval dark, post-medieval light again—was entirely the accepted view, and nobody seemed to notice the odd dichotomy, whereby Christian believers also believed that the pagan civilisations, in all respects *except* their paganism, were incomparably superior to the Christian civilisations which succeeded them. Such a dichotomy could be comfortably ignored by a Protestant or a freethinker (who could say to himself: "Christianity has been reformed now—reformed from 'superstition' "); it was not so easy for a Catholic.

> The only difference between us in relation to the monks is, that he[6] thinks most arts of learning flourish'd among 'em, and I am of the opinion that only some sort of learning was barely *kept alive* by 'em. He believes the most natural and obvious sense of that line (A second deluge *learning* over-run) will be thought meant of learning in general, and I fancy it will be understood only, as 'tis meant, of polite learning, criticism, poetry, &c., which is the only learning concerned in the subject of the *Essay*.

[5] 24 November 1714.

[6] A Catholic priest who objected.

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> I took occasion to mention the superstition of some ages after the subversion of the Roman Empire, which is too manifest a truth to be denied, and does in no sort reflect upon the present Catholics, who are free from it. . . . What these therefore in their own opinion are really angry at is that a man whom their tribe persecuted and oppressed (Erasmus by name) should be vindicated after a whole age of obloquy, by one of their own people who is free and bold enough to utter a general truth in behalf of the dead.[7]

The defence is hardly convincing, for three reasons. In the first place, what Pope actually wrote was not merely that the "monks" neglected certain kinds of learning but that they positively helped to destroy them. The monks/Goths association ("and the monks finish'd what the Goths begun") is especially betraying, for "Gothick" was still a term of unqualified contempt, currently used in all contexts with the meaning of "barbarous." In the second place, the "some sorts of learning" which, Pope allows, the monks "kept alive" (not, be it noted, "contributed to") must mean, or include, theology. Thus to relegate medieval scholastic theology to an unfrequented corner, in a phrase of contemptuous condescension, is entirely in the style of the Enlightenment. And in the third place, the boundaries of "superstition" are never indicated. Where does the true faith end and where does superstition begin?

Unconvincing though the defence may be, one can see where Pope is working to. He is attempting to retain the faith while rejecting all those things in it—or on its periphery—which conflict with the demands of Augustan reason. He is rejecting, in particular, the clerical and the medieval—and that means, the orthodox theology of the Church. On this ground, the main clash was concerned with the *Essay on Man*. That is still a mysterious and puzzling poem. What used to be the accepted view of it has been questioned in our own time—the view that it is simply a piece of Deist philosophizing, un-Christian if not anti-Christian, a tissue of propositions borrowed from the unbeliever Bolingbroke and imperfectly understood by the borrower. It is not so simple as that; it did not seem so simple to Pope himself. He was uneasy about it from the start: when the poem had been published, but was not yet acknowledged as his, he used his Catholic friend Caryll as a means of testing its orthodoxy, or at least its reception by the orthodox. He throws to Caryll a delicate bait of depreciation, to induce him to state his opinion freely:

[7] To Caryll, 25 June 1711; to Caryll, 19 July 1711.

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> At least it is incorrect and has some inaccuracies in the expressions; one or two of an unhappy kind, for they may cause the author's sense to be turned, contrary to what I think his intention, a little unorthodoxically.[8]

He gives his own "unbiassed" opinion with a splendid air of detached objectiveness:

> To the best of my judgment the author shews himself a Christian at last in the assertion, that all *Earthly Happiness* as well as *Future Felicity* depends on the doctrine of the gospel, love of God and man.[9]

And finally, having extracted from Caryll a favourable verdict ("Your candid opinion not only on the *Essay on Man,* but its author pleases me truly"), he comes to the undeniable conclusion: "I think verily he is as honest, and as religious a man as myself."[10]

Caryll's replies have not survived, nor do we know how far he was deceived by Pope's anonymity. Pope's friends were often willing to fall in with those little games of deception by which Pope made his literary career a career also of tortuous personal politics. But this was more serious; Pope was really nervous about the *Essay on Man.* His nervousness was soon justified, when the poem (or rather, a bad French translation of it) received the full-blooded onslaught of the orthodox Crousaz; and the depth of Pope's dismay at this confirming of his early fears is clearly reflected in the humble, the almost pathetic gratitude with which he welcomed Warburton's proof that after all the poem was perfectly Christian:

> You have made my System as clear as I ought to have done and could not. It is indeed the Same System as mine, but illustrated with a Ray of your own, as they say our Natural Body is the same still, when it is Glorified. I am sure I like it better than I did before, and so will every man else. I know it meant just what you explain, but I did not explain my own meaning so well as you: You understand me as well as I do myself, but you express me better than I could express myself.[11]

His own defence here, as with the questioned passage of the *Essay on Criticism,* was a defence by negation: the Christian doctrines, he claims, are not found in the poem because the poem's subject did not call for them. So he explained it to Spence:

[8] 8 March 1732/3.
[9] To Caryll, 1 January 1733/4.
[10] To Caryll, 28 February 1733/4.
[11] To Warburton, 11 April 1739.

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> Some wonder why I did not take in the fall of man in my essay, and how the immortality of the soul came to be omitted. The reason is plain; they both lay out of my subject, which was only to consider man as he is—in his present state, not in his past or future.

The defence is essentially the same: theology is relegated, put aside. It seems an odd evasiveness, in a poem which deals very largely (whatever Pope may say) with God—quite as much as with Man. It is hard to accept Pope's proposition, that from such a poem the basic doctrines of Christianity could be omitted—if the author really believed them, in any active or effective sense. *Could* such an author have a great deal to say about God—and never mention the Incarnation? Or a great deal to say about Man—and never mention the Fall or redemption? And if one looks at the poem, one is struck by a generalised vagueness whenever the concept of divinity is evoked and also by a continual slurring of the boundary between Nature and God. They are treated, in fact, as virtually identical:

> Thus God and Nature linked the general frame,
> And bade self-love and social be the same. *(III.317)*

> 'Twas then the studious head or generous mind,
> Follower of God, or friend of human kind,
> Poet or patriot, rose but to restore
> The faith and moral Nature gave before;
> Relumed her ancient light, not kindled new;
> If not God's image, yet his shadow drew. *(III.283)*

> Nor think, in Nature's state they blindly trod;
> The state of Nature was the reign of God. *(III.147)*

It seems impossible (in spite of Warburton) to reconcile such lines as these with orthodox theology; even clearer is the impossibility of reconciling this:

> For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;
> His can't be wrong whose life is in the right. *(III.305)*

For such clashes, three explanations are possible. Intellectual confusion—he didn't really know what he was saying; or evasiveness—he was trying, perhaps more by instinct than by intention, to keep his readers uncertain of his real beliefs; or definite unbe-

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lief—he knew what he meant, and he knew that what he meant was opposed to his nominal faith. The last should certainly be rejected. In such matters, at any rate, Pope was a man of great sincerity, and would never have been guilty of the flat hypocrisy—as it must have been, on this assumption—of saying to Louis Racine that he was willing to "submit all his opinions to the Decision of the Church."[12] The first explanation has been the most widely accepted. It was that of Bolingbroke from the unbeliever's side and of Johnson from the believer's. And two things may be admitted which make for that explanation: that Pope's was not a mind which moved with ease among the abstract rigours of philosophy, and that the position—or rather, positions—he was committed to were dubiously reconcilable by any mind. Yet a complete unawareness of what he was really saying does not seem plausible. It is true that Pope was not a trained philosopher; it is equally true that he was not a fool. He was a man of great intellectual sophistication, who had plenty of clerical and theological friends (Swift, Berkeley, Atterbury), and who was very much alive to the controversies of his age. The total theological innocence ascribed to him seems incredible.

I believe that what he was trying to do—though he did it imperfectly because it was not really his province, spasmodically because he was not profoundly interested, and elusively because he was afraid of giving offence—was to produce a version of his faith which would harmonise with the spirit of the age and his own acceptance of that spirit. He was, in fact—to use a later formulation—a Catholic Modernist. The way of the Catholic Modernist has always been hard. In some respects, it was easier in the early eighteenth century than it had been before and would be later, for the effectiveness (in England at any rate) of the Church's authority seems to have been a good deal smaller and the weightiness of its orthodoxy a good deal less imposing; in other respects, it was harder, for there was much less general respect for the Church to assist the Catholic intellectual in gaining at least a hearing. It is time to look at what appears to be Pope's most serious effort at stating his true position. In 1717 his father died. Atterbury, the Anglican Bishop of Rochester—a very close friend and a man for

[12] 1 September 1742. Racine—like Crousaz, on the basis of a bad French translation—had attacked the *Essay on Man* in his poem *La Religion*.

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whom Pope felt great affection and respect—then wrote him a letter suggesting, with the utmost delicacy, that his father's death afforded Pope a fair opportunity of changing his Church:

> When you have paid the Debt of Tenderness you owe to the Memory of a Father, I doubt not, but you will turn your thoughts towards improving that Accident to your own ease and Happiness. You have it now in your Power to pursue that Method of thinking and living which you like best.[13]

It is notable that Atterbury takes it for granted that this is what Pope would really want to do; it is fair to assume that he must have had, or thought he had, good reason from Pope himself to think so, and in fact what the Bishop thought is confirmed by the evidence of one of Pope's fellow-Catholics, Edward Blount, as quoted by Spence. "Mr. Pope is a Whig," said Blount, "and would be a Protestant, if his mother were dead." Pope's answer to Atterbury's suggestion (20 November 1717) is careful and serious. He gives four reasons for rejecting it. The first is personal: his mother is still alive, and she would be as deeply grieved by his apostasy as his father would have been. This, he recognizes, might not be taken by some as an adequate reason—"a rigid divine may call it a carnal tye, but sure it is a virtuous one: at least I am more certain that it is a duty of nature to preserve a good parent's life and happiness, than I am of any speculative point whatever." The second reason is that he has, in the past, studied the works of theological controversy, but only to find that he didn't know what he believed. "I found myself a Papist and a Protestant, by turns, according to the last book I read. I am afraid most Seekers are in the same case, and when they stop, they are not so properly converted, as outwitted." The third reason is that he cannot feel that there is such a great difference. "I verily believe your Lordship and I are both of the same religion, if we were thoroughly understood by one another; and that all honest and reasonable Christians would be so, if they did but talk enough together every day; and had nothing to do together, but to serve God and live in peace with their neighbours." The fourth reason is that though Pope agrees that to become a Protestant might help him in his worldly career, he has no such ambitions. "Contemplative life is not only my scene, but it is my habit too. I begun my life where most people

[13] Atterbury to Pope, 8 November 1717.

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end theirs, with a disrelish of all that the world calls Ambition."

So far it is still what we have seen before: a graceful refusal to argue it out, a very Augustan assumption that theology is nothing much more than word-spinning, out of which certainty will never emerge, and an equally Augustan assumption that the true beliefs of all men of good sense and goodwill are really the same. But now Pope comes to a declaration a little more positive in tone—though even this, significantly, still begins with a negative:

> I am not a Papist, for I renounce the temporal invasions of the Papal power, and detest their arrogated authority over Princes, and States. I am a Catholick, in the strictest sense of the word . . . I have a due sense of the excellence of the British constitution. In a word, the things I have always wished to see are not a Roman Catholick, or a French Catholick, or a Spanish Catholick, but a true Catholick: and not a King of Whigs, or a King of Tories, but a King of England.

That declaration ought to be put beside another, for which Atterbury was also, though indirectly, responsible: when the Bishop was about to stand his trial, in 1722, for treasonable Jacobite activities, Pope, who was to give evidence on his behalf, asked Lord Harcourt for advice:

> I resolve to take any opportunity of declaring (even upon Oath) how different I am from what a reputed Papist is. I could almost wish I were asked if I am not a Papist? Would it be proper, in such case, to reply, That I don't perfectly know the Import of the word, and would not answer any thing that might for ought I know, be prejudicial to me. . . . But that *if to be a Papist be to profess and hold many such Tenets of a faith as are ascribed to Papists, I am not a Papist. And if to be a Papist, be to hold any that are averse to, or destructive of, the present Government, King, or Constitution; I am no Papist.*[14]

The intention behind these two declarations is clearly this. Pope is affirming that he is a Catholic but not a Papist. He is saying that for the Papacy as a temporal and political force he shares the opinion of his Protestant fellow-countrymen; he regards its power as harmful, reactionary, and opposed to the true interests of his country. He is therefore very anxious to dissociate himself from those of his English fellow-Catholics who still believed that their faith obliged them to revolutionary (i.e., Jacobite) politics. These

[14] To Lord Harcourt, 6 May 1722.

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Catholics, he no doubt thought, were simply out of date. They were behaving still as if they were Elizabethan Catholics, or Jacobean Catholics, in an age which, as it hoped—and as Pope hoped—had outgrown the fanaticism of the "graceless zealots," on either side, who brought about persecutions and civil wars. For Pope shared entirely the dominant sentiment of his age, the determination that English society must never again be split as it had been in the age before. And Pope is saying also, in these declarations, that he does not share all the "tenets of faith" which are held by other Catholics; what tenets he does share he carefully keeps unmentioned, but judging from his remark to Atterbury that the Bishop and he were "both of the same religion," it seems that he is thinking of such tenets as are common at least to the Churches of England and of Rome; and in that case the tenets he does not share must be of the kind which he thought to be merely peripheral—superstitious, irrational, "Gothick"—the things he talked of to Lady Mary, such as belief in angels, in intercession of saints, in prayers for the dead, in everything, one might put it, which savoured of the *contemporary miraculous*. Like most Augustan Christians, Pope was quite willing to believe in miracles—provided they had happened a long time ago.

Whether a belief thus attenuated is adequate, may be left for theologians to decide. But however attenuated it was, the fact remains that Pope did not formally abandon it. What held him back? Partly, of course, the personal reasons: love of his parents certainly, pride probably. But largely, also, because Pope had an Augustan mind of the sort that was deeply suspicious of conversion. Conversion was something dubious in itself; it had a whiff of the wild and persecuting past; it savoured of fanaticism; it implied that one took oneself a little too seriously—who were you, to set yourself against the wisdom of your forebears?—and the wrangles of theologians a great deal more seriously than they merited. Conversion would bring about a certain ill for a dubious good. That is more or less what he said to Warburton, as Spence informs us:

> The doctor [i.e., Warburton] said: "Why then should you not conform with the religion of your country?" He seemed, in himself, not averse to it, and replied, "There were but two reasons that kept him from it: one, that the doing so would make him a great many enemies; and the other, that it would do nobody else any good."

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The wise man accepted, if he possibly could, the situation in which he found himself; the argument which Pope used to Warburton would apply with equal force from the other side, and indeed one can feel fairly confident that Pope would have regarded the matter with no less dubiety if Swift or Atterbury, or Warburton himself, had shown any symptoms of turning to Catholicism. The man of good sense was convinced that right conduct was at once more important, more definable, and more attainable than right belief. He was convinced also that in common life "appearance" could be at least as important as "reality," since common life was largely made up of "appearances," that is, of the ways in which men behaved to each other, and of all appearances that was the most important which made for the peace and unity of the social group. And so there is no need to take with cynicism what Spence reports of Pope's last encounter with his faith, on his deathbed. "When Mr. Hooke asked him, Whether he wou'd not dye as his Father and Mother had done; and whether he shou'd send for a Priest? He said, 'He did not suppose that was essential; but it would look right.' "

***Notes on Contributors** (cont.)*

MAXINE W. KUMIN's first book *Halfway* is soon to be published by Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

The British critic, PATRICK CRUTTWELL, teaches at the University of Exeter. His first novel, *A Kind of Fighting,* was recently published here by Macmillan.

STANLEY EDGAR HYMAN's article in this issue is from his forthcoming book, *Poetry and Criticism: Four Revolutions in Taste,* to be published in the Spring by Atheneum.

SYLVIA PLATH is a young American writer now living in London. A first volume of her poems is to be published in England next year.

The article in this issue by A. ALVAREZ is part of a forthcoming book on the School of Donne.

The poems by WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS in this issue are dedicated to his two grandchildren.

JOHN HALL WHEELOCK, whose first book of verse was published in 1905, has a new book of poems, *Elegies and Exaltations,* and a collection of essays, *Prefaces to Poetry,* scheduled for publication in 1961.

Other poems of Gottfried Benn, translated by CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON, appeared in *Gottfried Benn: Primal Vision,* published this year by New Directions.

The noted critic, NORTHROP FRYE, is Principal of Victoria College, Toronto.

VIVIAN MERCIER is back teaching at City College of New York after a year at the University of California in Berkeley. He has just finished a book on *The Irish Comic Tradition.*

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STANLEY EDGAR HYMAN

The Rape of the Lock

THE OCCASION FOR POPE'S "The Rape of the Lock," published in 1712 and republished in a considerably revised version in 1714, was a tiny scandal. Lord Petre had cut off a lock of Miss Arabella Fermor's hair and refused to return it, and the incident had caused bad feeling between the two families. Pope's friend Caryll who was friendly with both families, Pope told Spence, "desired me to write a poem to make a jest of it, and laugh them together again." Pope produced a poem of two cantos in iambic pentameter couplets within a fortnight, and it appears to have had the desired effect. Despite Addison's advice that the poem was "a delicious little thing" as it stood and not to tamper with it, Pope felt that it could be made more ambitious, and in 1714 he expanded it to five cantos, with additional scenes and an elaborate mock-epic machinery of Rosicrucian supernaturals that he got from a book called the *Comte de Gabalis*. In its final version, "The Rape of the Lock" first describes the elaborate toilet of Belinda, tended by her guardian sylph, Ariel, and other supernaturals. She and another maiden, Clarissa, then have an epic combat at ombre with the baron and another gentleman, at which the baron cuts off one of Belinda's tresses. The gnome Umbriel journeys to the underworld Cave of Spleen to return with a load of wild female emotions, and there is a furious Homeric battle between men and women, in the course of which the lock disappears, to reappear in the sky as a comet with a hairy tail, writing Belinda's name immortal.

The principal effect the poem gives at every point is of order and control. Its action, described in resounding epic imagery, is always tiny. The baron's madness comes from the mildest of intoxicants:

> Coffee (which makes the politician wise,
> And see through all things with his half-shut eyes)
> Sent up in vapours to the baron's brain
> New stratagems, the radiant lock to gain.

Belinda's reaction when the lock is cut off, which we can assume

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to be wounded vanity, is put in heroic terms, then ironically undercut:

> Then flash'd the living lightning from her eyes,
> And screams of horror rend th'affrighted skies.
> Not louder shrieks to pitying Heaven are cast,
> When husbands, or when lapdogs breathe their last.

Passions, as Dryden advised, are carefully kept under control. Instead of Cleopatra's soul-consuming love, we are told of such virgins as Belinda:

> With varying vanities, from every part,
> They shift the moving toyshop of their heart.

In the last canto, Clarissa appeals to two of the highest virtues of the Augustan age. She says:

> How vain are all these glories, all our pains,
> Unless good sense preserve what beauty gains. . . .

and adds:

> What then remains, but well our power to use,
> And keep good humour still, whate'er we lose?

The "good sense" and "good humour" Clarissa summons up are the poet's virtues too. Pope told Spence of the critic William Walsh:

> He used to encourage me much, and used to tell me, that there was one way left of excelling; for though we had several great poets, we never had any one great poet that was correct; and desired me to make that my study and aim.

Like its subject, the poem too is a game within clearly defined rules. We can imagine Pope writing his hundreds of couplets, with hardly a two-syllable rhyme in the entire poem, as a *tour de force* not unlike the baron's, and encompassing a whole range of feeling within the confines of the stylized like Belinda playing at ombre.

If we are tempted to read more into the poem than its trivialities, we had our warning early. In 1715, a year after the complete "Rape of the Lock" was published, one Esdras Barnivelt published a pamphlet: *A Key to the Lock, or a Treatise proving beyond all contradiction the dangerous tendency of a late Poem, intitled the Rape of the Lock, to Religion and Government.* In it Barnivelt

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showed that Belinda represents Great Britain, that the lock is the barrier treaty and the baron who cuts it off the Earl of Oxford, that Clarissa is Lady Masham, Sir Plume Prince Eugene, and so on. "Esdras Barnivelt" was of course Alexander Pope, having some fun with the tendency of his time to find hidden political meanings, and not averse to stirring up a little controversy about his poem. The tendency of our time has been to find other kinds of hidden meanings. It would be equally ludicrous to produce a Freudian interpretation in which the poem is a projection of Pope's castration complex, or Belinda is ego, the baron id, and Clarissa superego; or a Marxian interpretation with Belinda the English yeomanry expropriated by baronial enclosures and forcibly proletarianized; or a Frazerian interpretation in which Belinda is the corn maiden reaped by the annual baron in a fertility ritual. The solar mythologists of the nineteenth century would have shown, with plenty of apt quotations from the poem, that Belinda is the sun, descending at night into the Cave of Spleen and rising in splendor in the heavens the next morning. Esdras Barnivelt might have written any of these.

Nevertheless, the poem is clearly much more meaningful than its surface. We cannot accept it, as the nineteenth century did, as the "bit of filigree-work" William Hazlitt calls it, or as Leslie Stephen's "brilliant, sparkling, vivacious trifle." There is a sense in which Pope is a very knowing Freudian. The poem is one vast comic symbolic defloration, proper to a cruelly deformed poet for whom such ventures were symbolic or nothing. The hair is a fertility or sex symbol, described in the poem as catching men as it traps birds and hooks fish. "Lock" is a pun on Freud's lock that all keys fit, and it is a pun that Pope makes explicit in the title of his Barnivelt pamphlet. Its rape by the baron is a sex act, and the baron cries triumphantly to Belinda at the end of Canto Four:

> What wonder then, fair nymph! thy hairs should feel
> The conquering force of unresisted steel?

Its loss is the unalterable loss of virginity, comically contrasted with "a wretched sylph" who gets in the way of the shears and is cut in half, then is given Pope's parenthetical reassurance "(But airy substance soon unites again)" that he is unlike flesh-and-blood substance. We get the same comedy in the free-for-all, with Belinda's impossible demand:

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"Restore the lock!" she cries; and all around
"Restore the lock!" the vaulted roofs rebound.

If the card game is a stylized seduction (when the Queen of Hearts is taken, "the blood the virgin's cheek forsook"), Belinda's punishment of the baron, the pinch of snuff that makes him sneeze and sneeze, is parody orgasm. In this world that Freud and Pope share,

Men prove with child, as powerful fancy works,
And maids, turn'd bottles, call aloud for corks.

Belinda's remark to the baron,

O hadst thou, cruel! been content to seize
Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these!

may be her conscious pubic-hair joke (Cleanth Brooks, in *The Well Wrought Urn,* thinks it is not) but it is certainly Pope's. The battle in the last canto is a torrent of double entendre. Pope writes:

Now Jove suspends his golden scales in air,
Weighs the men's wits against the lady's hair;
The doubtful beam long nods from side to side;
At length the wits mount up, the hairs subside.

The baron, "Who sought no more than on his foe to die," warns Belinda when she has him helplessly sneezing, "Thou by some other shalt be laid as low." Brooks has noted the frail china jars that symbolize virginity in the poem: broken as an alternative to breaking "Diana's law" in Canto Two, fallen into fragments when the lock is cut off in Canto Three, recollected as having been tottering that morning in Canto Four.

Without reading Marx, Pope is just as clear about social context in the poem. He carefully shows us the glittering falsity of leisure class life, with much of the gold really gilt: "gilded chariots," "gilded mast," novels "neatly gilt." While Belinda dresses in the third canto, the real world of social institutions, production and exchange goes on:

The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,
And wretches hang that jurymen may dine;
The merchant from th' Exchange returns in peace,
And the long labours of the toilet cease.

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It is this dichotomy of two worlds or classes that underlies the poem's principal stylistic device, the comic yoking of two objects of very different degrees of importance with one verb, a rhetorical device called "zeugma." Thus:

> Or stain her honour, or her new brocade;
>
> Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom
> Of foreign tyrants, and of nymphs at home;
> Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey,
> Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea.

While the lesser world of events—brocades, nymphs, and tea or tay—go on in the poem, the significant events of the social political, and economic world are clearly visible through its gossamer texture.

Pope certainly knew as much as Frazer and the Cambridge scholars about ritual. Superficially, "The Rape of the Lock" is a parody of religion, and it is interesting to know that both the families involved were Roman Catholic, as was Pope. Belinda's toilet is called a "holy ritual" and is actually, as G. Wilson Knight has pointed out in *The Burning Oracle,* a ritual in the Eros cult, in which Belinda is both priestess and goddess, a priestess in her own worship. The divine tress is naturally "sacred." We see the baron at his worship:

> For this, ere Phoebus rose, he had implor'd
> Propitious Heaven, and every power ador'd,
> But Chiefly Love—to Love an altar built,
> Of twelve vast French romances, neatly gilt.
> There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves,
> And all the trophies of his former loves;
> With tender billet-doux he lights the pyre,
> And breathes three amorous sighs to raise the fire.

The coffee-making and drinking are described as a sacred ceremonial in Canto Three, and like many such, quickly turn orgiastic.

Deeper than these parodies of religious ritual are the poem's two epic battles, the mock-warfare of the card game and the free-for-all between the beaux and belles at the end, both rigidly stylized and ceremonial. Cards, love, and war are equated as games with identical rules, and sex and mock-death are ambivalent con-

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summations that turn into each other. In the second canto, Belinda arms herself for the fray like a Homeric warrior, putting on a seven-fold petticoat like the shield of Achilles: "stiff with hoops, and arm'd with ribs of whale." She is a mock-combatant in a ritual battle, who must lose and be symbolically slain to win and be reborn. Deeper still, the poem is the great myth or the great journey of ritual, the descent into the belly of the whale or the Cave of Spleen:

> Now glaring fiends, and snakes on rolling spires,
> Pale spectres, gaping tombs, and purple fires. . . .

followed by emergence transformed. Belinda starts in *hubris* and is chastened, starts in Edenic innocence and has a Fall, becomes another "maid" "to numerous ills betray'd." Then Clarissa as initiator can reveal the mystery to her. Like the Orphic "A kid, I have fallen into milk," this is that in time "locks will turn to gray," but that this one lock, like her immortal soul, can be taken out of time. It will be eternal, perpetually fair, in a comet or a constellation, in heaven, in a poem by Alexander Pope. Initiate maidens in primitive cultures are ritually deflowered, scarified, circumcized, have their teeth filed or knocked out; Belinda loses a lock of hair and becomes a woman.

I have thus done precisely what I said I would not and should not do, found vast significances in Pope's poem, written in high spirits in his early twenties, "intended only to divert a few young ladies." The Rosicrucian machinery of air sylphs, earth gnomes, fire salamanders and water nymphs points at Pope's division of women into four comparable types; coquettes, prudes, termagants and acquiescents. But Belinda, a nymph, or docile, aspires to be a sylph or coquette and soon transcends everything by becoming a goddess; Clarissa, identified as a prude, emerges as a true wisdom figure. Here as elsewhere the poem demolishes its own machinery, as though it too aspired to break through the polished surface into significance. When Walsh advised Pope to become the first "correct" poet, he meant, in Austin Warren's paraphrase in *Rage for Order,* "The age of myth-making is over." However, just as a mock-epic is not a mockery of the epic but a kind of epic in symbolic and ironic terms, so it requires a mock-myth equally valid although symbolic and ironic.

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A poem that deliberately invites comparison, by specific reference, to Homer and the Bible, Dante and Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton, is less apt to be setting out to parody the whole of our literary culture than attempting to build on it ironically. A good part of the nineteenth century saw Pope's poetry as "spoonfulls of boiling oil, ladled out by a fiendish monkey at an upstairs window." The twentieth century, represented by John Middleton Murry, F. R. Leavis, and Brooks, has tended to see him as a serious metaphysical poet like Donne. He need not be either, really. Brooks reminds us that a few years after Pope published "The Rape of the Lock," his good friend Jonathan Swift wrote "The Lady's Dressing Room," in which the toilet of a society belle like Belinda is seen as infinitely foul and evil. Pope sees everything that Swift sees, but he nevertheless regards the event as comic, absurd, rather touching, somewhat beautiful. Belinda making up, like Pope, is an artist reordering nature. Pope must affirm the incident of the rape of the lock as important to show its ultimate triviality, must mock it in terms of epic and myth to show its considerable significance. He must see whole heavens and earths in a lock of hair to tell us something serious and important about the small spot we live in. Pope's vision of girls like Belinda shifting "the moving toyshop of their heart" is uniquely his own, but it is not so terribly far from Yeats' ultimate vision, the place where all the ladders start, "the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart."

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SYLVIA PLATH

Ouija

It is a chilly god, a god of shades,
Rises to the glass from his black fathoms.
At the window, those unborn, those undone
Assemble with the frail paleness of moths,
An envious phosphorescence in their wings.
Vermilions, bronzes, colors of the sun
In the coal fire will not wholly console them.
Imagine their deep hunger, deep as the dark,
For the blood-heat that would ruddle or reclaim.
The glass mouth sucks blood-heat from my forefinger.
The old god dribbles, in return, his words.

The old god, too, writes aureate poetry
In tarnished modes, maundering among the wastes,
Fair chronicler of every foul declension.
Age, and ages of prose, have uncoiled
His talking whirlwind, abated his excessive temper
When words, like locusts, drummed the darkening air
And left the cobs to rattle, bitten clean.
Skies once wearing a blue, divine hauteur
Ravel above us, mistily descend,
Thickening with motes, to a marriage with the mire.

He hymns the rotten queen with saffron hair
Who has saltier aphrodisiacs
Than virgins' tears. That bawdy queen of death,
Her wormy couriers are at his bones.
Still he hymns juice of her, hot nectarine.
I see him, horny-skinned and tough, construe
What flinty pebbles the plowblade upturns
As ponderable tokens of her love.
He, godly, doddering, spells
No succinct Gabriel from the letters here
But floridly, his amorous nostalgias.

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Electra on Azalea Path

The day you died I went into the dirt,
Into the lightless hibernaculum
Where bees, striped black and gold, sleep out the blizzard
Like hieratic stones, and the ground is hard.
It was good for twenty years, that wintering—
As if you had never existed, as if I came
God-fathered into the world from my mother's belly:
Her wide bed wore the stain of divinity.
I had nothing to do with guilt or anything
When I wormed back under my mother's heart.

Small as a doll in my dress of innocence
I lay dreaming your epic, image by image.
Nobody died or withered on that stage,
Everything took place in a durable whiteness.
The day I woke, I woke on Churchyard Hill.
I found your name, I found your bones and all
Enlisted in a cramped necropolis,
Your speckled stone askew by an iron fence.

In this charity ward, this poorhouse, where the dead
Crowd foot to foot, head to head, no flower
Breaks the soil. This is Azalea Path.
A field of burdock opens to the south.
Six feet of yellow gravel cover you.
The artificial red sage does not stir
In the basket of plastic evergreens they put
At the headstone next to yours, nor does it rot,
Although the rains dissolve a bloody dye:
The ersatz petals drip, and they drip red.

Another kind of redness bothers me:
The day your slack sail drank my sister's breath
The flat sea purpled like that evil cloth
My mother unrolled at your last homecoming.
I borrow the stilts of an old tragedy.
The truth is, one late October, at my birth-cry
A scorpion stung its head, an ill-starred thing;
My mother dreamed you face down in the sea.

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The stony actors poise and pause for breath.
I brought my love to bear, and then you died.
It was the gangrene ate you to the bone
My mother said: you died like any man.
How shall I age into that state of mind?
I am the ghost of an infamous suicide,
My own blue razor rusting in my throat.
O pardon the one who knocks for pardon at
Your gate, father—your hound-bitch, daughter, friend.
It was my love that did us both to death.

Suicide Off Egg Rock

Behind him the hotdogs split and drizzled
On the public grills, and the ochreous salt flats,
Gas tanks, factory stacks—that landscape
Of imperfections his bowels were part of—
Rippled and pulsed in the glassy updraft.
Sun struck the water like a damnation.
No pit of shadow to crawl into,
And his blood beating the old tattoo
I am, I am, I am. Children
Were squealing where combers broke and the spindrift
Raveled wind-ripped from the crest of the wave.
A mongrel working his legs to a gallop
Hustled a gull flock to flap off the sandspit.

He smouldered, as if stone-deaf, blindfold,
His body beached with the sea's garbage,
A machine to breathe and beat forever.
Flies filing in through a dead skate's eyehole
Buzzed and assailed the vaulted brainchamber.
The words in his book wormed off the pages.
Everything glittered like blank paper.

Everything shrank in the sun's corrosive
Ray but Egg Rock on the blue wastage.
He heard when he walked into the water

The forgetful surf creaming on those ledges

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Moonrise

Grub-white mulberries redden among leaves.
I'll go out and sit in white like they do,
Doing nothing. July's juice rounds their nubs.

This park is fleshed with idiot petals.
White catalpa flowers tower, topple,
Cast a round white shadow in their dying.

A pigeon rudders down. Its fan-tail's white.
Vocation enough: opening, shutting
White petals, white fan-tails, ten white fingers.

Enough for fingernails to make half-moons
Redden in white palms no labor reddens.
White bruises toward color, else collapses.

Berries redden. A body of whiteness
Rots, and smells of rot under its headstone
Though the body walk out in clean linen.

I smell that whiteness here, beneath the stones
Where small ants roll their eggs, where grubs fatten.
Death may whiten in sun or out of it.

Death whitens in the egg and out of it.
I can see no color for this whiteness.
White: it is a complexion of the mind.

I tire, imagining white Niagaras
Build up from a rock root, as fountains build
Against the weighty image of their fall.

Lucina, bony mother, laboring
Among the socketed white stars, your face
Of candor pares white flesh to the white bone,

Who drag our ancient father at the heel,
White-bearded, weary. The berries purple
And bleed. The white stomach may ripen yet.

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A. ALVAREZ

Marvell and the Poetry of Judgment

IN ALL THE DIVERSE TALENT of the School of Donne, Richard Crashaw and Andrew Marvell are the two poets most wholly opposed. With Crashaw the recurrent question is why, given that power and fertility, he was not a greater poet. It is as though he had in him the essential stuff of great poetry, but frittered it away. Marvell, on the other hand, produced some of the most perfect poems in the language and yet is, for all that, somehow not a "major poet." Dr. Leavis once wrote of Dryden: "He may be a greater poet than Marvell, but he did not write any poetry as indubitably great as Marvell's best." The corollary is also true: Marvell may have written a few great poems but he was not a great poet.

He has done very well in this century. Eliot, Leavis and Empson, for example, have been prompted by him to some of their finest criticism. So his excellence is firmly established. I merely want to suggest here why, for all the subtlety and accomplishment of his writing, Marvell was essentially one of the last products of a school, but still too much part of it to be quite able to go forward to the next.

He is, in a way, the School of Donne in miniature, working in all the variations of the style: in "To his Coy Mistress," "The Definition of Love" and, in another way, "On a Drop of Dew," he writes like Donne; in "The Coronet" and "Eyes and Tears" he is largely a follower of Herbert; "The Match," "The Fair Singer" and "The Picture of Little T. C." are like Carew and Lovelace; "Upon Appleton House" is heavily influenced by Cleveland; "A Dialogue between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure" has something of the formal stance of Cowley; his pastoral poems have behind them an Elizabethan and Continental tradition which descended through poets like Aurelian Townshend; "The Nymph complaining for the death of her Faun" sounds like a kind of pastoral-classical Crashaw; he went on to write political satires in rhymed couplets. In none of these poems was he a mere imitator;

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he always rehandled his themes and styles in a peculiarly original way. But the variety and varied perfection of his work show that, despite his correct, almost sedate, career—gentleman tutor, government official, M.P.—he was, in terms of technical accomplishment, the most professional of that extraordinary group of amateurs that made up the School of Donne. He was, in short, "literary" where Crashaw, with his religious-heroic style, his inventive enthusiasm and his Baroque principle of sensuous substitution, was the most "rhetorical." The difference is between a poet whose intelligence worked *on* literature, critically and analytically, and a poet who needed a great deal of artifice in order to express his intelligence at all.

The main element in Marvell's poetry is its balance, its pervading sense of intelligent proportion. He is, I think, the foremost poet of judgment in the English language, and "An Horatian Ode" is his foremost poem. By *judgment* I mean a quality which presents, balances and evaluates a whole situation, seeing all the implications and never attempting to simplify them. The poet's whole effort is directed towards a full and delicate sanity, so that what he finally achieves is a kind of personal impersonality. For example:

> 'Tis Madness to resist or blame
> The force of angry Heavens flame:
> And, if we would speak true,
> Much to the Man is due.

The poem gets its effect by the certainty with which it balances the large religious and political context—in the first couplet—against a personal judgment, so that both appear necessary parts of a whole understanding of the situation.

Again:

> . . . (Who) Could by industrious valour climbe
> To ruine the great Work of Time,
> And cast the Kingdome old
> Into another Mold.
> Though Justice against Fate complain,
> And plead the Antient Rights in vain:
> But those do hold or break
> As Men are strong or weak.

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Nature that hateth emptiness,
Allows of penetration less:
And therefore must make room
Where greater Spirits come.

I have seen the lines used as an example of political slipperiness, as though Marvell were praising Cromwell whilst fundamentally supporting the King. But what in fact is so impressive in the poem is the sureness with which the poet separates out the various threads so that he can proceed without disorder in the full knowledge of what his feelings on the subject really are. Personal preferences and natural sanity hold each other in check. His distaste for that kind of hard-working ambition, particularly when it sets itself up against the tested sanctities of tradition, sway the balance one way. His acknowledgment of the natural and rational laws of power sway it back the other. This manner of opposing two ways of thinking and feeling is, of course, typical of a good deal of Metaphysical poetry. But elsewhere, in, say, Herbert's "The Collar" or "Affliction(I)," the turnabout always follows some peculiarly intricate dialectic by which the poet argues himself into accepting his full responsibilities. He presents the whole process of understanding: the knot, the gradual untying and the final ordering of the threads. In Marvell's poetry, on the other hand, the personal balance is already achieved before the poem begins. He approaches his subjects fully aware of his personal bias. The result is that he always has the air of a man dealing with something outside him, rather than with what at least began as an unresolved complex of emotions. It is this impression of the mind detachedly at play over a number of possible choices that earns Marvell the title of poet of judgment. Another way of putting it would be to call him a political poet. Certainly, "An Horatian Ode" is one of the two finest political poems in the language; the other is *Coriolanus*. As a political poet he works analytically, resolving at every point personal choice into a larger context of general or social responsibilities. In this sense, Marvell is closer to Dryden and Pope than he is to Donne.

This habit of always leaving himself the elbow-room of impersonality—whether it is called judgment, a political trick of the mind, or a peculiar intensity of civilization—has saved him from

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the excesses of his interpreters. There is, for example, an aura of suggestiveness about a great deal of his work than can, with a little effort, be translated into symbolism of a kind. But the fact that Marvell disliked violence—which we know from comments not in his poems—appreciated the peace and quiet of gardens as a relief from the turbulence of the Civil War, and so wrote eloquently, in one disguise or another, on the subject of Eden, does not make him a Quietist, nor does it illuminate his poetry with flashes of mystical insight *à propos* of God or Nature. The strangeness of a poem like "The Nymph complaining for the death of her Faun," or of that unexpected couplet in "Bermudas":

> But Apples plants of such a price,
> No Tree could ever bear them twice

is no evidence of any specific, extendable religious symbolism in Marvell's verse, nor of any plan to take his readers in by writing charmingly about what was really very serious. Marvell's use of religion seems to be much the same as his classicism. The subtlety of some of the nymph's complaints for her faun:

> Had it liv'd long, it would have been
> Lillies without, Roses within

or

> There is not such another in
> The World, to offer for their Sin

is no greater nor less than that of:

> The brotherless *Heliades*
> Melt in such Amber Tears as these.

Empson once wrote of this last couplet: "It is tactful, when making an obscure reference, to arrange that the verse should be intelligible even when the verse is not understood . . . If you had forgotten, as I had myself, who their brother was, and look it up, the poetry will scarcely seem more beautiful; such of the myth as is wanted is implied." The Biblical echoes are tantalizing and evocative in precisely the same way: they lend the poem weight and seriousness. But they do not restrict the area of its action to their own special realm. The Bible came more naturally to the seven-

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teenth century than to our day; it did not demand any peculiarly specialised effort of attention. For Marvell, as for every other educated man of his time, the Bible, like the classics, was a dimension of his extraordinarily civilized sensibility, and was controlled by it.

It is this that makes him such a deliberate, literary and decorous poet, particularly in his conceits. *Pace* Eliot, I cannot see that Marvell was ever carried away by his ingenuity with metaphors. But he came, as I said, at the end of the School of Donne and so could judge the technical means both for its vitality and in its corruption. And the corrupt conceit had effects very different from Donne's. In short, Marvell had read and taken good account of Cleveland; which meant he knew how to play the game of wit when it suited him. It was this element that Eliot missed when he accused Marvell's figure of the "Antipodes in Shoes" of being one of those "images which are over-developed or distracting; which support nothing but their own misshapen bodies." There is a side to Marvell's wit less serious than the one Eliot wished to emphasize. You can see it directly the conceit is put in its full context:

> But now the *Salmon-Fisher's* moist
> Their *Leathern Boats* begin to hoist;
> And, like *Antipodes* in Shoes,
> Have shod their *Heads* in their *Canoos.*
> How *Tortoise* like, but not so slow,
> These rational *Amphibii* go?
> Let's in: for the dark *Hemisphere*
> Does now like one of them appear.

Marvell's concept of wit was flexible enough to include the kind of deliberate playfulness that is found now only in light verse, and, if Eliot's *Old Possum* poems are typical, not often in that. The "Antipodes in Shoes," in fact, is not so much a conceit as a joke. And Marvell works for it deliberately. There is a preparatory pun in the preceding line—"Leathern Boats" suggests "boots" and so make way for the "shoes"—a solemn pedantry in the couplet following and a final piece of absurdity—the comparison of the dark coming down over the hemisphere with the coracles over the heads of the fishermen. They all have the same effect, and the effect is deliberately comic. "Deliberately," since it is unlikely that a poet as skilful as Marvell would have lapsed so absurdly at the

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end of a long poem without knowing why. I suggest he has two reasons: the first has to do with the occasion of the poem, the second with its literary means.

The absurd solemnity of that closing stanza may be more extreme than anything that has gone before in the poem but it is the same in kind. The poem is dedicated to Lord Fairfax, whose child, Mary, Marvell was then tutoring. All through the poem Marvell has treated the conventional occasions for conventionally exaggerated praise with a polite mock-seriousness, using conceits that are too conceited, too extreme. This does not hinder him from being very serious indeed in praising what he really admires in Fairfax, the political moderation and the firm desire for peace. But he writes with such delicate control that he can change from the fanciful to the profound without any clashing of gears. The whole effort presumes on a kind of formal intimacy between the poet and his audience: Marvell can be witty with his conventional praise because it is understood that his patron has qualities rarer and finer. In that sense it is a family poem; it would not be in good taste to be fulsome where fulsomeness is to be expected from everyone.

It is also a family poem in that the fancy is supposed to be amusing. And not only, I suggest, to Lord Fairfax. Compare, for example, those infamous Antipodes with a far more successful passage:

> And now to the Abbyss I pass
> Of that unfathomable Grass,
> Where Men like Grasshoppers appear,
> But Grasshoppers are Gyants there:
> They, in their squeking Laugh, contemn
> Us as we walk more low then them:
> And, from the Precipices tall
> Of the green spir's, to us do call.

This is a conceit, but it is hardly Metaphysical. It is, instead, nearer the wit of Lewis Carroll. The conceit, that is, is a matter of sharply refocussing the scene until it is adjusted to a child's vision: the hay tall enough to drown in and the grasshoppers gigantic, threatening presences. There was nothing in the detached elegance of the wit at Marvell's command which barred him from writing vivid, adult poetry which might also amuse a child. The tradition

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of an exclusively patronizing children's verse did not seem to have existed in the seventeenth century; perhaps it did not begin until Isaac Watts stooped to conquer. Marvell's conceit is no less successful because, like the elaborate pedantry of the "Antipodes in Shoes," it has behind it a faint nonsense air.

I am far from accusing Marvell of quaintness or suggesting that his poetry was, in any way, kid's stuff. On the contrary, Marvell's ability to blend this kind of fanciful exaggeration with a far more serious wit, and to give both an equivalent, if not an equal, subtlety, is a measure of his sophistication. It is preeminently a literary sophistication. Far from being victimized by the style, the poet seems perfectly aware of what the exaggerated conceit is and is not good for. It is, in fact, possible that by using this kind of witty playfulness to amuse the daughter of the house he is even taking the measure of the corrupt Metaphysical style. The most elaborate conceits begin when Mary Fairfax enters the poem, and this coincides with an obvious and deliberate echo of Cleveland. Marvell has:

> See how the Flow'rs, as at *Parade,*
> Under their *Colours* stand displaid:
> Each *Regiment* in order grows,
> That of the Tulip Pinke and Rose . . .

Cleveland wrote:

> The trees, like yeomen of her guard,
> Serving more for pomp than ward,
> Ranked on each side, with loyal duty
> Weave branches to enclose her beauty . . .

I am not pretending that Marvell's poem is really an elaborate critical parody of Cleveland; but it does seem that when he played Cleveland's game of wit to amuse his patron and his pupil, he was showing that he knew its precise range and value. Instead of being occasionally the victim of false wit, Marvell used it for his own ends.

I have defended at length some not very distinguished lines in order to point up a vital aspect of the poetry of judgment: its peculiarly literary control in the choice and manipulation of special effects. If these are an index of poetic achievement, then Marvell

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is a master. But when compared with Donne, it seems that what Marvell gained in control he lost in pressure. He rarely, if at all, lapses as Donne did at times. But then he hasn't the excuse. He was never as original; his poetic discoveries were within already charted poetic forms. His first desire in verse was, I think, to do it perfectly. And he gained this perfection by keeping away from insistently personal situations and absorbing all his energies in the literary form and process. He rarely has that air of creative improvisation, of having to invent a new form for a unique occasion. Instead, each poem seems to start from a peculiarly sensitive critical analysis of the particular genre.

Consider, for instance, "The Definition of Love":

My Love is of a birth as rare
As 'tis for object strange and high:
It was begotten by despair
Upon Impossibility.

Magnanimous Despair alone
Could show me so divine a thing,
Where feeble Hope could ne'er have flown
But vainly flapt its Tinsel Wing.

And yet I quickly might arrive
Where my extended Soul is fixt,
But Fate does Iron wedges drive,
And alwaies crouds it self betwixt.

For Fate with jealous Eye does see
Two perfect Loves; nor lets them close:
Their unione would her ruine be,
And her Tyrannick pow'r depose.

And therefore her Decrees of Steel
Us as the distant Poles have plac'd,
(Though Loves whole World on us doth wheel)
Not by themselves to be embrac'd.

Unless the giddy Heaven fall,
And Earth some new Convulsion tear;

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And, us to joyn, the World should all
Be cramp'd into a *Planisphere.*

As Lines so Loves *oblique* may well
Themselves in every Angle greet:
But ours so truly *Paralel,*
Though infinite can never meet.

Therefore the Love which us doth bind,
But Fate so enviously debarrs,
Is the Conjunction of the Mind,
And Opposition of the Stars.

It is based on a single aspect of some of Donne's love poems: his habit of bolstering up a feeling with abstract and scientific imagery until it can bear the weight of his complex logic. But Marvell presses this logical abstraction so hard that the feeling which justifies it seems to refine away to nothing. This is apparent in the imagery. The poem begins with three-dimensional allegorical figures—Despair, Hope, Fate—with tinsel wings, iron wedges and decrees of steel, who control "Loves whole World." It is all hard, solid and definite. The substantial globe, however, is then reduced to a two-dimensional model, the planisphere, and that, in turn, is reduced to the mere lines of a geometrical figure. Marvell's conclusion about the abstract refinement of their love—"the Conjunction of the Mind"—is borne out by the steady abstraction of the imagery. The poem is less of a love poem than an essay in abstraction. The poet, presumably, meant something of this kind when he called it "The Definition of Love." He is not to be criticised for failing to write a poem he never intended. But perhaps the piece is more formally perfect and neat than most of Donne's because Marvell has only the formal aspects to bother about. His stake in the thing seems first and foremost craftsmanly.

Marvell's practice in "The Definition of Love" is the rule for his work, not the exception. There is not one of his love poems which, when set next to any of Donne's, seems more than an exercise in the poetic kind. This holds even for one of his most perfect poems, "To his Coy Mistress." I cannot believe that, in terms of the poem—the biography, in these matters, being neither here

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nor there—the mistress ever existed. She is merely part of the poem's traditional occasion. She is of course wooed with wit and some admirable ironical flourishes. But the irony is largely at Marvell's own expense:

> Thou by the *Indian Ganges* side
> Should'st Rubies find: I by the Tide
> Of *Humber* would complain . . .

She is to do exotic things in exotic surroundings, while he is left to scribble away at his complaints on the dreary banks of the Humber, which flows through his native city, Hull. Even the brilliant conceit of his "vegetable Love" gains an extra dimension of irony when you remember his "green thought in a green shade" and all those innocent, Eden-like gardens to which Marvell wrote so many love poems of another kind. As for his mistress and his ideal love-making:

> An hundred years should go to praise
> Thine Eyes, and on thy Forehead Gaze . . .

That, and such physical detail as appears, is, as the editors have pointed out, founded on a turn of wit that Marvell took from Cowley. But the tone of the verse deepens and the rhythm becomes more charged when, in the section beginning "But at my back I alwaies hear. . . ," the subject changes from the girl to death. It is this sudden quickening of the witty detachment into something distinctly more sharply felt that makes me certain that Marvell is addressing himself rather than any supposed mistress. The real and moving poem is about time, death, waste and the *need* to love, rather than about love itself. Whatever of its power does not come from this source comes from the perfection of the performance: from the inevitable syllogistic progression (by which, incidentally, Marvell argues himself into accepting images of violence and war that go flatly against the current of all his other poetry), and, as Eliot said, from the weight behind the verse of the whole tradition of European love poetry.

One of the main differences between Marvell and Donne was not in the sophistication of their wit, which was where most of the other late Metaphysicals fell down, but in the uses their wit was put to. Donne's was exploratory; it brought whole and unexpected

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areas of awareness into the service of his single, immediate situation; and in doing so he changed the whole language of poetry. By accommodating it to the extraordinary range of his intelligence and to the kind of sceptical intensity of feeling of which he was master, he introduced into poetry a wholly new standard of realism. Marvell's wit, on the other hand, worked in literary forms already to hand and perfected them; it was a force that restrained, controlled and impersonalized.

But there are moments, admittedly rare, when this emphasis on civilized control and artistic impersonality lapses into what might, in a poet less skilled, be vulgar indifference:

> How wide they dream! The *Indian* Slaves
> That sink for Pearl through Seas profound,
> Would find her Tears yet deeper Waves
> And not of one the bottom sound.
>
> I yet my silent Judgment keep,
> Disputing not what they believe:
> But sure as oft as Women weep,
> It is to be suppos'd they grieve.

The first stanza is one of the most allusive Marvell ever wrote, and he always wrote well on tears. Rhythmically, I think, it is based on Donne:

> O wrangling schooles, that search what fire
> Shall burne this world, had none the wit
> Unto this knowledge to aspire,
> That this her feaver might be it?

But Marvell's stanza has undergone a distancing typical of his work; it is something more than merely changing "wrangling" to "dreaming." The slight roughness of Donne's verse has wholly disappeared: for example, the repetition of "That" and "this" so close together, which gives the lines their colloquial directness and which depends upon the personal cadence of the speaking voice to carry them off. Gone, too, is the reference to a lively contemporary issue—the Schoolmen at that time were very much under attack. The essence of Marvell's conceit is a certain exoticism; he uses all the technical skill he can muster to build up the

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strangeness and grandeur of the weeping woman: the alliteration of consonants and vowels, for example, which makes the second and third lines echo on themselves. But having built up his effects with such imaginative strength, Marvell seems able to reassert his "silent Judgment" only by a final gesture of lame cynicism. Admittedly, the last stanza is more in keeping with the tone of the rest of the poem than is that oddly rich conceit; but the renewed cynicism is so sudden and extreme that it makes me suspect that that beautiful detachment of Marvell's was, at times, defensive. If Donne is also guilty at times of sudden lapses into cynicism, the occasions are always a matter of too much assertion, never of too delicate a withdrawal.

With the exception of George Herbert, Marvell is the most considerable of Donne's followers. But his strength is quite different. He is, as I suggested, far more carefully and absorbedly a craftsman in poetry; and this went with a different poetic stance. It matters not a jot that his love poems are thin in comparison with Donne's; there is, after all, little outside Shakespeare's sonnets that can stand that comparison. The difference is between kinds of poets: between the poet whose first concern is to judge and the poet who, above all, synthesizes. The vitality of Donne's poetry depends on his knack of taking on everything that comes with the same immediacy, accuracy and full, tough intelligence. At the end of any of Donne's poems the forces have been resolved and ordered in such a way as to make you believe that a similar readjustment of the feelings have taken place in the poet himself. It is, in a sense, a poetry of action. Marvell, however, is always a little further outside his subjects. His extraordinarily civilized sophistication is a fixed quantity. With it he weighs and judges his material with such dispassionate fairness as to leave you, as a final and lasting taste, with the mature subtlety of his judgment. Unlike Donne and Herbert, he never writes a poem which shows him in the process of attaining this maturity. It is, rather, a quality without which he would not have been able to begin to write. Marvell's detached and sophisticated wit may be infinitely more subtle and less stereotyped than that of the Augustan Man of Sense, but it is of essentially the same kind. In achievement, if not chronologically, he is the last of the School of Donne.

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WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

Paul

1
when you will arrive
as deep
as you will need go

to catch the black-fish
the hook
has been featly baited

by the art you have
and
you do catch them

2
with what thoroughness
you know
seize that glistening

body translated
to
that language you

will understand gut
clean
roast garnish and

3
serve to yourself who
better
eat and enjoy

however you
divide
and share

that black-fish heft
and shine
is your own

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Suzy

1
women your age have decided
wars and the beat
of poems your grandfather

is a poet and loves you
pay attention
to your lessons an inkling

of what beauty means to
a girl your age
may dawn soon upon you

2
life is a flower when it
opens you will
look trembling into it unsure

of what the traditional
mirror may reveal
between hope and despair while

a timorous old man
doubtfully half
turns away his foolish head

3
a bunch of violets clutched
in your idle
hand gives him a place

beside you which he cherishes
his back turned
from you casually appearing

not to look he yearns after
you protectively
hopelessly wanting nothing

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GEORGE P. ELLIOTT

She Touches Him

The hesitation of her smile when they meet,
She the dear one whom he lost, who likes him,
And the way mere lashes edge her glance with meaning;
The seemliness with which he brushes her
Out-reaching hand, lest he should not find strength
To let it go, as he should, as one should,
And the way he slights the many-greened spring day
To listen to her chat, to glimpse her glance:
In each casual chance this man discovers
(Whatever he would) her hesitance and
His seemliness edge the touch with meaning.

Yet, he has come determined he shall find
That the hot gust which mingles mind with the
Wild dust, and which did stir him, now can ignite
Only nostalgia in his temperate skin:
Wherefore (as though it were renunciation,
Not his heart's clench against her heart's refusal)
He wills he shall not will that each-with-other
Of which the prosperous flesh is copula.
Whereas: she shows him a small, recent scar.

Their shoulders chance to bump when they avoid
Thorned branches of blossoms thronging their path.
Or they stand, quiet, watching the rapids;
A gust with her tresses brushes his cheek;
He laughs, and their glance holds. Then, by this eddy,
She lays—and quickly withdraws it—her hand
On his bare arm, jogged by a memory
She wants to share, of the frog he caught here once,
Set in her dubious hand, stroked till it jumped.
These reach not only, in this lover, where
Glance goes and where touch stirs,
but likewise everywhere.

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JOHN HALL WHEELOCK

The Mask

What is this secret joy
That in all things alive,
Which Time soon shall destroy,
Will flourish still and thrive—
Brute rumor in the blood,
Dim prescience in the heart,
Of some transcendent good
In which they have a part,

Some sense, in each, of all
Bounding its finite will,
Splendor perpetual,
Steadfast, abiding still—
Beyond these accidents
Of change, of death and birth,
The changeless Excellence
That gives all change its worth.

From some deep wisdom springs
The joy all being shares,
The tragedy of things
Is but a mask it wears;
The joy that in the dark
Kindles a million stars
Will hood the ancient spark
In endless woes and wars.

On earth, where joys abound,
Oh, the sheer joy to be!
The heel upon the ground
Goes down in ecstasy,
Or, moved to a brisker measure,
Instep and arch will rise
In dance-rhythm whose pleasure
Music glorifies.

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Such bounty we inherit,
Such dear delight is here,
The heart shall hardly bear it
To know a thing so dear—
In springtime, when the swallow
Veers her windy flight,
When in green dell and hollow
The little leaves hang light.

By meadowland or water,
In ocean, earth, and air,
To swift escape or slaughter
One joy moves everywhere;
For joy the elm-leaf tips
Sway green against the sky,
The fire between joined lips
Is kindled in fierce joy.

For joy, for joy, for joy,
The tragic stage is set;
In tragic masks, for joy
Slayer and slain are met:
Some joy, deep and indwelling,
In all these forms at play,
A joy beyond all telling,
Burns life, burns death away.

PHILIP BOOTH

The Owl

I thought he'd gone, that owl,
to wherever owls winter at.
But no, he's out there still,
hooing the cold, awake

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to what small things an owl
can hear under those big fake
horns. My eyes blink shut,
but his are full of the dark,
and see. I saw him once,
at noon, when they wouldn't work,
and he sat sleeping, up
in a deadwood oak, looking more
like a displaced giant moth
than a bird of prey. Except
for his triple talons, which tore
at the branch, or at dreams, while he slept,
he sat unruffled, and aloof.
I tried to stone him off,
but I missed: his dreams were remote;
and swaying, he never woke.
Or say he waited me out.
That was ten days ago,
and I'm still unsure of us both.
By our different lights, we're blind
two ways to our different stake
in these woods. I hear him hoo,
again, and think of the beak
those dove sounds issue from.
I'm frozen, too. I'd sleep,
if I could, while he hunts,
but I've got a mind to outlast him.
And this time, but not to cast
stones, I get up and walk out,
to find what he's hunting for.
Not that I think this first snow
will be full of tracks to identify.
That owl, from whatever tree
he looks down, has only an eye
for what's warm, and shivering
still, with a need to run free.
Awake where my eyes adjust
to the dark, I stand frozen now,
and I begin to see.

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CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON

The Death of Orpheus

From the German of Gottfried Benn

How alone you leave me, beloved—
driven out of Erebos,
bringing the forest
to inhospitable Rhodope,
two-colored berries,
fruit glowing red—
creating foliage,
plucking the lyre,
my thumb on the string.

Three years in the north wind.
It is sweet to think of the dead,
so distant one,
the voice is heard more clearly,
one feels the kisses,
fugitive or deep—but
to think of you astray among shadows!

How alone you leave me—
river nymphs rush at me,
rock beauties gesture,
coo: "In the vacant wood
only fauns and satyrs, but you,
singer, builder of arches
of bronze light and skies full of swallows—
let music go—
oblivion—!"

—danger—

And one stares so oddly.
And a tall one, freckled,
dappleskinned ("yellow poppy")
allures in all meekness, hints of chastity
unbridled in her lust—(purple
in the cup of love—!) but in vain.

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No, you will not fade away,
nor will you elide with
Iole, Dryope, Procne,
your features will not melt into Atalanta's,
then I might even stammer
Eurydice to Lais.

but: danger—!

And now the stones
no more obeying the voice,
the singer,
hiding themselves in moss,
the branches leaf-soothed,
the hoes by corn-ears comforted—
naked mattocks—!

Now exposed to stones hurled by the bitches,
rioting—
now the eyelashes wet,
the gums are bleeding—
and now the lyre
drifting downstream—

the riverbanks resounding—

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Reviews

PATRICK CRUTTWELL

Pope and Swift and the English Augustans

FOR MANY YEARS Professor Bonamy Dobrée held the Chair of English in the University of Leeds. He is a considerable figure in the British academic world and especially in that part of it which is concerned with the study of English. He is a joint editor of the Oxford History of English Literature, a work in twelve large volumes which may claim a certain institutional status and which has been coming out, volume by volume, for a long time. And this volume,[1] on the early eighteenth century, is his own unaided work. All of which, I fear, makes it needful to say, with more emphasis than one might use of a lesser luminary shining in a constellation making smaller claims to authority, that Professor Bonamy Dobrée has written a very bad book.

It is not easy to write a good literary history. I sometimes wonder if it is possible. There are so many objectives all of which may be thought desirable but some of which are sure to be incompatible; there are so many temptations to digression; the subtle and wandering path of relevance is so hard to trace. You may write from a definite viewpoint, a critical viewpoint, and then at least your work should have coherence; but it may have it at the price of incompleteness and partiality. Or you may chase that will of the wisp called "objectivity," and then you can bring in everything; but you bring it in at the price of doing justice and proportion to nothing. You must decide how much "background" your literary picture calls for and of what nature it is to be: how much of biography, politics, sociology, philosophy, science, theology, and all the rest of them. You must settle with yourself who are the major figures of the age you deal with, and then how much attention is to be spared for the lesser ones. It is not easy to write a good literary history.

But one thing is certain. You will not even come within measurable distance of not writing a bad one, unless you have asked yourself at the outset the simple and difficult questions: "What does this age really mean to me? If I had to define its essence in one paragraph, could I write that paragraph? What would I say in that paragraph?" It is because Professor Dobrée has not asked these questions—or, if he has, has found no answers—that he has written a bad book. It is also quite astoundingly ill-written; and since the Elder Statesmen of literary

[1] ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, 1700-1740, by *Bonamy Dobrée*. Oxford. $10.00.

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criticism not infrequently tell us, their juniors, that they at least know how to write, their prose is at least elegant, literate, the prose of gentlemen and men of the world, far above our barbarous jargonings, some specimens of *this* prose are worth preserving. This, then, is Professor Dobrée's notion of how to handle the English negative:

> Nor do we so greatly admire his prose, preferring Steele's as Landor did, and do not much taste either his humour, nor his oleographic Loves of Hilpa and Shalum, and the Vision of the Temple of Fame.

Here he is in the ecstasies of metaphor:

> And if here and there he picked up contradictory ideas from Shaftesbury, and caught a whiff of what Dennis was saying, it is really only when he deserted his philosophic scaffolding that he adumbrated, almost accidentally it might seem, notions which are really progressive and illuminating, and served to strengthen the basis upon which Akenside could afterwards build his major poem.
>
> But at least he helped to break fresh ground, and with him a breeze of life swept through the theatre.

This is what he offers us as a sentence well-turned and perspicuous:

> Supported by the massive notes (here others may have helped), in which the personages assume a baffling character, part-real, part-ghostly, imparting another, deeper dimension, the whole, in fact made more weighty by a superstructure which might be regarded as a heavy donnish joke, the poem, itself written for so many different levels of response, seems sometimes to cry out emotionally.

And this is his conception of English syntax:

> Both spartan and pleasure loving, we follow him studying the law.

If style is an index of content, this style is a faithful index. The book is shapeless, incoherent, enormously difficult to read: and difficult because it gives us no clear contours of the ground it professes to map. The greatness of the great men is neither enforced nor precisely defined; there is much about almost everybody and almost everything, but it is only from the number of pages allotted that one could deduce the author's awareness that Swift and Pope were great writers, Thomson middle-sized, and Dudley Ryder a very small one. The quality of his writing shows no such awareness.

He will not help us to ask and answer the right questions about the Augustan age in English letters. Professor Brower's book[2] will. It will do so not only because it is as certainly a good book as Professor Dobrée's is a bad one, but because it goes at once to the centre of the problem. The radical questions are these. Why *Augustan?* What was

[2] ALEXANDER POPE, THE POETRY OF ALLUSION, by *Reuben Arthur Brower*. Oxford. $5.60.

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really meant, what achieved, by the age's following of the Roman model? How far was it a fruitful following, how far a servile and unimaginative imitation, the product rather of a pedagogical monopoly than of a true and spontaneous discipleship? For the "classical background" in the past was a matter as much of schooling as of literature, and its effects on the English genius have been dubiously valuable. The possession of taste in Greek and Latin is very far from a guarantee of it in English. Coleridge was dead right when he denounced the effects on English poetry of Greek and Latin verse-making at school and University; and think of the metrics of Bridges, the classical pastiches of Arnold, and Housman's abuse of Greek myth as cover for his masochist death-wish. Or take this sentence from Quiller-Couch's preface to the second edition of the *Oxford Book of English Verse:*

> The Muses' house has many mansions: their hospitality has outlived many policies of State, more than a few religions, countless heresies —*tamen usque recurret Apollo*—and it were profane to misdoubt the Nine as having forsaken these so long favoured islands.

—and note how the Latin tag is happily mated with an English prose self-conscious, unnatural, dead. But the early eighteenth century was one of the two periods of English literature in which a sustained and intelligent effort was made, not only by pedagogues and writers of small and derivative talent but by writers of living genius, to use the classics as a source of life. The other age was that of the Humanists in the early sixteenth century: but their effort failed. So, in a sense, did that of the Augustans—failed, that is, to make the English genius durably "classical"—but it succeeded triumphantly in something more important. It nourished a splendid crop of good writing. How was that done then, which was not done at other times?

Professor Brower suggests how it was done by the greatest poet of the age. His book shows what Pope made out of Homer and Virgil, Ovid and Horace; but it is much more than one of those dreary recordings of sources and tracings of allusions. He realises that the vital thing is to "feel the *presence* of the poets and the poetry of Greece and Rome in something like the way in which Pope and his contemporaries felt it" and to see how their presence contributed to the special quality of Pope's own verse. He begins, as Pope began, from Dryden: a lesser poet, a cruder sensibility, but one who taught Pope's readers a lesson which Pope himself was to profit from. "He reaffirmed the public role of the poet, the Graeco-Roman conception of the poet as the voice of a society"; he created a "generously allusive mode with all of its wider cultural implications." On that basis, with a public thus prepared, Pope could go ahead; and then the classical education, which all his readers, to varying degrees, had received, was no liability but an asset, for it meant that they were ready to pick up and to welcome those "cultural implications."

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He began from pastoral. He adapted to his own society the pastoral magic, which made the shepherd "a man living in mysteriously close relation to physical nature"; he dressed it in the urban clothes of the *Rape of the Lock,* he used it, parodied, in the picture of Italy in the fourth book of the *Dunciad.* From pastoral he turned to pastoral's derivative, the mystical prophecy of a better world, the Golden Age returned, a patriotism sublimated into a vision of order and peace. "Like the *Georgics, Windsor Forest* is the poem of a generation that had lively memories of a revolutionary period and that after long if glorious wars was becoming almost obsessively attached to peace."

From pastoral Pope went on to the Ovidian rhetoric of "heroic love." There, in the *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* and *Eloisa to Abelard,* he was hardly so successful; the mode would not be naturalised. French can do it; in English it is too likely to become ridiculous—

> See my lips tremble, and my eyeballs roll,
> Suck my last breath, and catch my flying soul!

But the true heroic mode was more amenable. The English Augustans were not as hopelessly remote from the Homeric ethos as we may imagine them; in some things, they were closer to it than we are. "So Pope's readers expected his version of the *Iliad* to satisfy a certain standard of aristocratic manners. They knew very well—as we can hardly know—how a noble lord behaved, how he walked and how he talked on great occasions." And therefore Pope's heroic mode was one of "august oratory," of a dignified decorum and a moralising emphasis, of a certain civilised polish even when the story is one of savagery, which may strike us—with all our anthropology and archaeology and (what is more important) our radical doubts of what we mean by "civilization"—as un-Homeric, but which was certainly right for Pope and his age and which might—who knows?—be thought more right than our versions by Homer himself.

All these classical modes Pope did not so much employ as digest; he made them so much a part of himself that the boundary between acquired and innate becomes unreal. But all of them were in a sense preliminaries to the discovery of his truest affinity—the discovery of Horace. Horace is the spirit who informs Pope's greatest work. He is there in large measure in the *Essay on Man,* there all the time and superbly in the *Moral Essays* and the *Imitations* and the *Epistle to Arbuthnot.* The quality, above all others, that Pope learned from him was flexibility—the power to vary at will from irony and persiflage to serious satire and morality, from the poetry of his private self talking with friends to the poetry of a public figure addressing the State. Because for Pope Horace was more than a figure of antiquity, and Horace's Rome more than just one past age out of many, he could make his Horatian commentary on his own London society under Queen Anne relevant and contemporary, and because he did that it is still relevant for us. "His criticism of the century . . . is translatable into terms that

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have present meaning and application, at least for readers who feel the living continuity between our civilization and the Graeco-Roman."

Can one say the same of Swift? He is certainly the other great writer of the age; there is no denying his power or his fascination. To most readers, probably, he makes a quicker and directer appeal than Pope makes. You must, to some degree, train yourself for Pope; but in Swift there are symptoms of self-betrayal and self-laceration, there are rough edges and odd contradictions, which intrigue the amateur psychiatrist in all of us. A book about Swift's writings is almost always, if you look at it, a book about Swift; and a book about Swift is almost always an attempt to *explain* Swift. Mr. Denis Johnston's[3] is the latest. His explanation has at least one merit; it exists in the region of fact and not of psychology. He argues that Swift himself was the illegitimate son of Sir John Temple, father of the Sir William Temple who became Swift's employer and not very satisfactory patron, and that Swift's "Stella" was the illegitimate daughter of Sir William himself. They were therefore uncle and niece: and Swift knew it. It was this, then, and no abnormality in Swift, which made their marriage, and probably their sexual union, impossible; it was this, and no hatred and fear of the physical, which caused Swift's desperate cruelty to "Vanessa." Mr. Johnston makes out a good case. I cannot say that it is a proven case; the evidence is circumstantial rather than direct. In the nature of things, such an explanation (like conjectures about Shakespeare's Mr. W. H.) can never be entirely accepted; since it claims to be one of fact, it could be accepted only if one were quite sure that it *was* fact. Its effect, if accepted, would clearly be to *normalize* Swift; his "mystery" would cease to be something in himself and become nothing more than unlucky and external circumstance.

I must admit in myself some reluctance to believe this. I don't want my Swift normalized. My interest in him—and, I think, most people's interest—depends on the mystery remaining mysterious. The questions he provokes—why was he what he was? what was wrong with him? what was his secret?—are like the questions that romantic criticism asks of Hamlet, and like them, the questions remain interesting because, and as long as, they remain unanswered. Of all the Augustan writers, it is only Swift who has roused such romantic interest. Yeats could hardly help taking him for a figure in his mythical Pantheon—

> Swift beating at his breast in Sibylline frenzy blind,
> Because the heart in his blood-sodden breast was dragging him down to mankind.

Nothing like that could possibly be written of Pope. But that is not because Pope lacked passion or tragedy—there was plenty of both in him—but because he was a greater artist. There is no need to explain him; there is no mystery in him to explain. He is there on the page, complete and self-contained.

[3] IN SEARCH OF SWIFT, by *Denis Johnston*. Barnes and Noble. $7.50.

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NORTHROP FRYE

The Nightmare Life in Death[1]

IN EVERY AGE THE THEORY OF SOCIETY and the theory of personality have closely approached each other. In Plato the wise man's mind is a dictatorship of reason over appetite, with the will acting as a thought police hunting down and exterminating all lawless impulses. The ideal state, with its philosopher-king, guards and artisans, has the corresponding social form. Michael explains to Adam in *Paradise Lost* that tyranny must exist in society as long as passion dominates reason in individuals, as they are called. In our day Marxism finds its psychological counterpart in the behaviorism and conditioned reflexes of Pavlov, and the Freudian picture of man is also the picture of western Europe and America, hoping that its blocks and tensions and hysterical explosions will settle into some kind of precarious working agreement. In this alignment religion has regularly formed a third, its gods and their enemies deriving their characteristics from whatever is highest and lowest in the personal-social picture. A good deal of the best fiction of our time has employed a kind of myth that might be read as a psychological, a social, or a religious allegory, except that it cannot be reduced to an allegory, but remains a myth, moving in all three areas of life at once, and thereby interconnecting them as well. The powerful appeal of Kafka for our age is largely due to the way in which such stories as *The Trial* or *The Castle* manage to suggest at once the atmosphere of an anxiety dream, the theology of the Book of Job, and the police terrorism and bureaucratic anonymity of the society that inspired Freud's term "censor." It was the same appeal in the myth of *Waiting for Godot* that, so to speak, identified Samuel Beckett as a contemporary writer.

As a fiction writer Samuel Beckett derives from Proust and Joyce, and his essay on Proust is a good place to start from in examining his own work. This essay puts Proust in a context that is curiously Oriental in its view of personality. "Normal" people, we learn, are driven along through time on a current of habit-energy, an energy which, because habitual, is mostly automatic. This energy relates itself to the present by the will, to the past by voluntary or selective memory, to the future by desire and expectation. It is a subjective energy, although it has no consistent or permanent subject, for the ego that desires now can at best only possess later, by which time it is a different ego and wants something else. But an illusion of continuity is kept up by the speed, like a motion picture, and it generates a corresponding objective illusion, where things run along in the expected and habitual form of causality. Some people try to get off this time machine, either because

[1] MOLLOY, MALONE DIES, and THE UNNAMABLE. Three Novels by *Samuel Beckett*. Grove Press. $6.50.

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they have more sensitivity or, perhaps, some kind of physical weakness that makes it not an exhilarating joyride but a nightmare of frustration and despair. Among these are artists like Proust, who look behind the surface of the ego, behind voluntary to involuntary memory, behind will and desire to conscious perception. As soon as the subjective motion-picture disappears, the objective one disappears too, and we have recurring contacts between a particular moment and a particular object, as in the epiphanies of the madeleine and the phrase in Vinteuil's music. Here the object, stripped of the habitual and expected response, appears in all the enchanted glow of uniqueness, and the relation of the moment to such an object is a relation of identity. Such a relation, achieved between two human beings, would be love, in contrast to the ego's pursuit of the object of desire, like Odette or Albertine, which tantalizes precisely because it is never loved. In the relation of identity consciousness has triumphed over time, and destroys the prison of habit with its double illusion stretching forever into past and future. At that moment we may enter what Proust and Beckett agree is the only possible type of paradise, that which has been lost. For the ego only two forms of failure are possible, the failure to possess, which may be tragic, and the failure to communicate, which is normally comic.

In the early story *Murphy,* the hero is an Irishman with an Irish interest in the occult—several of Beckett's characters are readers of AE —and a profound disinclination to work. We first meet him naked, strapped to a chair, and practising trance. He has however no interest in any genuine mental discipline, and feels an affinity with the easy-going Belacqua of Dante's *Purgatorio,* also mentioned in *Molloy,* who was in no hurry to begin his climb up the mountain. What he is really looking for is a self-contained egocentric consciousness, "windowless, like a monad," that no outward events can injure or distort. He is prodded by the heroine Celia into looking for a job, and eventually finds one as a male nurse in a lunatic asylum. In the asylum he discovers a kinship with the psychotic patients, who are trying to find the same thing in their own way, and his sympathy with them not only gives him a job he can do but makes him something rather better than a "seedy solipsist." To take this job he turns his back on Celia and other people who are said to need him, but in the airless microcosm of his mental retreat there is the one weak spot that makes him human and not completely selfish, a need for communication. He looks for this in the eye of Endon, his best friend among the patients, but sees no recognition in the eye, only his own image reflected in the pupil. "The last Mr. Murphy saw of Mr. Endon was Mr. Murphy unseen by Mr. Endon." He then commits suicide. The same image of the unrecognizing eye occurs in the one-act play *Embers* and in *Krapp's Last Tape,* where Krapp, more completely bound to memory and desire than Murphy, and so a figure of less dignity if also of less absurdity, looks into his mistress's eyes and says "Let me in." Another echo in this phrase will meet us in a moment.

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The figure of the pure ego in a closed auto-erotic circle meets us many times in Beckett's masturbating, carrot-chewing, stone-sucking characters. A more traditional image of the consciousness goaded by desire or memory (an actual goad appears in one of Beckett's pantomimes), is that of master and servant. Already in *Murphy* we have, in the characters Neary and Cooper, an adumbration of the Hamm and Clov of *Endgame,* a servant who cannot sit and a master who cannot stand, bound together in some way and yet longing to be rid of each other. *Watt* tells the story of a servant who drifts into a house owned by a Mr. Knott, one of a long procession of servants absorbed and expelled from it by some unseen force. Technically the book is a contrast to *Murphy,* which is written in an epigrammatic wisecracking style. In *Watt* there is a shaggy-dog type of deliberately misleading humor, expressing itself in a maddeningly prolix pseudo-logic. One notes the use of a device more recently popularized by Lawrence Durrell, of putting some of the debris of the material collected into an appendix. "Only fatigue and disgust prevented its incorporation," the author demurely informs us. The most trivial actions of Watt, most of which are very similar to those we perform ourselves every day, are exhaustively catalogued in an elaborate pretence of obsessive realism, and we can see how such "realism" in fiction, pushed to so logical a conclusion, soon gives the effect of living in a kind of casual and unpunishing hell. Watt finally decides that "if one of these things was worth doing, all were worth doing, but that none was worth doing, no, not one, but that all were unadvisable, without exception."

In *Waiting for Godot,* as everyone knows, two dreary men in bowler hats stand around waiting for the mysterious Godot, who never appears but only sends a messenger to say he will not come. It is a favorite device of ironic fiction, from Kafka to Menotti's opera *The Consul,* to make the central character someone who not only fails to manifest himself but whose very existence is called in question. The two men wonder whether in some way they are "tied" to Godot, but decide that they probably are not, though they are afraid he might punish them if they desert their post. They also feel tied to one another, though each feels he would do better on his own. They resemble criminals in that they feel that they have no rights: "we got rid of them," one says, and is exhorted by a stage direction to say it distinctly. They stand in front of a dead tree, speculating, like many of Beckett's characters, about hanging themselves from it, and one of them feels an uneasy kinship with the thieves crucified with Christ. Instead of Godot, there appears a diabolical figure named Pozzo (pool: the overtones extend from Satan to Narcissus), driving an animal in human shape named Lucky, with a whip and a rope. Lucky, we are told, thinks he is entangled in a net: the image of being fished for by some omnipotent and malignant angler recurs in *The Unnamable.* In the second act the two turn up again, but this time Pozzo is blind and helpless, like Hamm in *Endgame.*

When the double illusion of a continuous ego and a continuous caus-

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ality is abolished, what appears in its place? First of all, the ego is stripped of all individuality and is seen merely as representative of all of its kind. When asked for their names, one of the two men waiting for Godot answers "Adam," and the other one says: "At this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us." Similar echoes are awakened by the Biblical title of the play *All that Fall,* with its discussion of the falling sparrow in the Gospels and its final image of the child falling from the train, its death unheeded by the only character who was on the train. Other characters have such names as Watt, Knott and Krapp, suggestive of infantile jokes and of what in *Molloy* are called "decaying circus clowns." The dramatic convention parodied in *Waiting for Godot* is clearly the act that killed vaudeville, the weary dialogue of two faceless figures who will say anything to put off leaving the stage. In the "gallery of moribunds" we are about to examine there is a series of speakers whose names begin with M, one of whom, Macmann, has the most obvious everyman associations. In this trilogy, however, there is a more thoroughgoing examination of the unreality of the ego, and one which seems to owe something to the sequence of three chapters in *Finnegans Wake* in which Shaun is studied under the names Shaun, Jaun and Yawn, until he disappears into the larger form of HCE. It is the "Yawn" chapter that Beckett most frequently refers to. In reading the trilogy we should keep in mind the remark in the essay on Proust that "the heart of the cauliflower or the ideal core of the onion would represent a more appropriate tribute to the labours of poetical excavation than the crown of bay."

Molloy is divided into two parts: the first is Molloy's own narrative; the second is the narrative of Jacques Moran, who receives a message through one Gaber from an undefined Youdi to go and find Molloy. The echoes of Gabriel and Yahweh make it obvious by analogy that the name "Godot" is intended to sound like "God." Youdi, or someone similar to him, is once referred to as "the Obidil," which is an anagram of libido. The associations of Molloy are Irish, pagan, and a Caliban-like intelligence rooted in a disillusioned sensitivity. Moran is French, nominally Christian, and a harsher and more aggressive type of sterility. Molloy, like many of Beckett's characters, is so crippled as to resemble the experiments on mutilated and beheaded animals that try to establish how much life is consistent with death. He is also under a wandering curse, like the Wandering Jew, and is trying to find his mother. There are echoes of the wandering figure in Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale,* who keeps knocking on the ground with his staff and begging his mother to let him in. But Molloy does not exactly long for death, because for him the universe is also a vast auto-erotic ring, a serpent with its tail in its mouth, and it knows no real difference between life and death. Overtones of Ulysses appear in his sojourn with Lousse (Circe), and the mention of "moly" suggests an association with his name. He is also, more Biblically, "in an Egypt without bounds, without infant, without mother," and a dim memory of Faust appears in his

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account of various sciences studied and abandoned, of which magic alone remained. Like the contemporary beats (in *Murphy,* incidentally, the padded cells are called "pads"), he finds around him a world of confident and adjusted squares, who sometimes take the form of police and bully him. "They wake up, hale and hearty, their tongues hanging out for order, beauty and justice, baying for their due." The landscape around him, described in terms similar to Dante's Inferno, changes, but he is unable to go out of his "region," and realizes that he is not moving at all. The only real change is a progressive physical deterioration and a growing loss of such social contact as he has. The landscape finally changes to a forest and Molloy, too exhausted to walk and unable, like Beckett's other servants, to sit, crawls on his belly like a serpent until he finally stops. He arrives at his mother's house, but characteristically we learn this not from the last sentence but from the first one, as the narrative goes around in a Viconian circle.

Just before the end of his account, Molloy, who hears voices of "prompters" in his mind, is told that help is coming. Moran sets off to find Molloy, aware that his real quest is to find Molloy inside himself, as a kind of Hyde to his Jekyll. He starts out with his son, whom he is trying to nag into becoming a faithful replica of himself, and he ties his son to him with a rope, as Pozzo does Lucky. The son breaks away, Moran sees Molloy but does not realize who he is, and gets another order to go back home. He confesses: "I was not made for the great light that devours, a dim lamp was all I had been given, and patience without end, to shine it on the empty shadows." This ignominious quest for self-knowledge does not find Molloy as a separate entity, but it does turn Moran into a double of Molloy, in ironic contrast to his attitude to his son. Various details in the imagery, the bicycle that they both start with, the stiffening leg, and others, emphasize the growing identity. Moran's narrative, which starts out in clear prose, soon breaks down into the same associative paragraphless monologue that Molloy uses. The quest is a dismal failure as far as Moran and Molloy are concerned, but how far are they concerned? Moran can still say: "What I was doing I was doing neither for Molloy, who mattered nothing to me, nor for myself, of whom I despaired, but on behalf of a cause which, while having need of us to be accomplished, was in its essence anonymous, and would subsist, haunting the minds of men, when its miserable artisans should be no more."

The forest vanishes and we find ourselves in an asylum cell with a figure named Malone, who is waiting to die. Here there is a more definite expectation of the event of death, and an awareness of a specific quantity of time before it occurs. Malone decides to fill in the interval by telling himself stories, and the stories gradually converge on a figure named Macmann, to whom Malone seems related somewhat as Proust is to the "Marcel" of his book, or Joyce to Stephen and Shem. Here an ego is projecting himself into a more typical figure (I suppose Malone and Macmann have echoes of "man alone" and "son of man,"

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respectively, as most of the echoes in Beckett's names appear to be English), and Macmann gradually moves into the cell and takes over the identity of Malone. Malone dreams of his own death, which is simultaneously occurring, in a vision of a group of madmen going for a picnic in a boat on the Saturday morning between Good Friday and Easter, a ghastly parody of the beginning of the *Purgatorio*. Dante's angelic pilot is replaced by a brutal attendant named Lemuel, a destroying angel who murders most of the passengers.

In *The Unnamable* we come as near to the core of the onion as it is possible to come, and discover of course that there is no core, no undividable unit of continuous personality. It is difficult to say just where or what the Unnamable is, because, as in the brothel scene of *Ulysses,* his fluctuating moods create their own surroundings. One hypothesis is that he is sitting in a crouched posture with tears pouring out of his eyes, like some of the damned in Dante, or like the Heraclitus who became the weeping philosopher by contemplating the flowing of all things. Another is that he is in a jar outside a Paris restaurant opposite a horsemeat shop, suspended between life and death like the sibyl in Petronius who presides over *The Waste Land.*

Ordinarily we are aware of a duality between mind and body, of the necessity of keeping the body still to let the mind work. If we sit quietly we become aware of bodily processes, notably the heartbeat and pulse, carrying on automatically and involuntarily. Some religious disciplines, such as yoga, go another stage, and try to keep the mind still to set some higher principle free. When this happens, the mind can be seen from the outside as a rushing current of thoughts and associations and memories and worries and images suggested by desire, pulsating automatically and with all the habit-energy of the ego behind it. Each monologue in the trilogy suggests a mind half-freed from its own automatism. It is detached enough to feel imprisoned and enslaved, and to have no confidence in any of its assertions, but immediately to deny or contradict or qualify or put forward another hypothesis to whatever it says. But it is particularly the monologue of *The Unnamable,* an endless, querulous, compulsive, impersonal babble, much the same in effect whether read in French or in English, and with no purpose except to keep going, that most clearly suggests a "stream of consciousness" from which real consciousness is somehow absent. *The Unnamable* could readily be called a tedious book, but its use of tedium is exuberant, and in this respect it resembles *Watt.*

The Unnamable, who vaguely remembers having been Malone and Molloy, decides that he will be someone called Mahood, then that he will be something called Worm, then wonders whether all his meditations really are put into his mind by "them," that is, by Youdi and the rest, for his sense of compulsion easily externalizes itself. If he knows anything, it is that he is not necessarily himself, and that it was nonsense for Descartes to infer that he was himself because he was doubting it. All Beckett's speakers are like the parrot in *Malone Dies,* who

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could be taught to say "Nihil in intellectu," but refused to learn the rest of the sentence. All of them, again, especially Malone, are oppressed by the pervasive lying of the imagination, by the way in which one unconsciously falsifies the facts to make a fiction more symmetrical. But even Malone begins to realize that there is no escape from fiction. There are no facts to be accurately described, only hypotheses to be set up: no choice of words will express the truth, for one has only a choice of rhetorical masks. Malone says of his own continuum: "I slip into him, I suppose in the hope of learning something. But it is a stratum, strata, without debris or vestiges. But before I am done I shall find traces of what was."

In *The Unnamable,* as we make our way through "this sound that will never stop, monotonous beyond words and yet not altogether devoid of a certain variety," the Unnamable's own desire to escape, to the extent that he ever formulates it as such, communicates itself to us. The tired, tireless, hypnotic voice, muttering like a disembodied spirit at a seance, or like our own subconscious if we acquire the trick of listening to it, makes us feel that we would be ready to try anything to get away from it, even if we are also its prisoner. There is little use going to "them," to Youdi or Godot, because they are illusions of personality too. Conventional religion promises only resurrection, which both in *Murphy* and in the Proust essay is described as an impertinence. But "beyond them is that other who will not give me quittance until they have abandoned me as inutilizable and restored me to myself." That other must exist, if only because it is not here. And so, in the interminable last sentence, we reach the core of the onion, the resolve to find in art the secret of identity, the paradise that has been lost, the one genuine act of consciousness in the interlocking gyres (the Dante-Yeats image is explicitly referred to) of automatism:

> . . . the attempt must be made, in the old stories incomprehensibly mine, to find his, it must be there somewhere, it must have been mine, before being his, I'll recognize it, in the end I'll recognize it, the story of the silence that he never left, that I should never have left, that I may never find again, that I may find again, then it will be he, it will be I, it will be the place, the silence, the end, the beginning, the beginning again . . .

Many curiously significant remarks are made about silence in the trilogy. Molloy, for example, says: "about me all goes really silent, from time to time, whereas for the righteous the tumult of the world never stops." The Unnamable says: "This voice that speaks, knowing that it lies, indifferent to what it says, too old perhaps and too abased ever to succeed in saying the words that would be its last, knowing itself useless and its uselessness in vain, not listening to itself but to the silence that it breaks." Only when one is sufficiently detached from this compulsive babble to realize that one is uttering it can one achieve any genuine serenity, or the silence which is its habitat. "To restore silence is the

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role of objects," says Molloy, but this is not Beckett's final paradox. His final paradox is the conception of the imaginative process which underlies and informs his remarkable achievement. In a world given over to obsessive utterance, a world of television and radio and shouting dictators and tape recorders and beeping space ships, to restore silence is the role of serious writing.

VIVIAN MERCIER

Sex, Success and Salvation[1]

To CRITICIZE NOVELS IN TERMS OF TECHNIQUE one needs space both to quote and to comment on what has been quoted. It would be easy to devote all the space available for a multiple review to a single novel. Instead of granting first place to technique, then, I should like for a change to lay the main emphasis upon subject matter. This approach limits one's assessment of any individual novel, but it can provide some insights into the current state of The Novel in general. Literary gossip writers love to discuss trends in the subject matter of best-selling novels; often, nothing but the subject matter differentiates one such novel from another. I believe, however, that a similar approach to the sort of novel (call it "serious" if you must, but please remember that "serious" need not mean "solemn") which is reviewed in a literary quarterly can remind us of The Novel's ambiguous past and help us to predict its murky future.

One fact in particular impresses me about the novels I have chosen for review: the relative unimportance of sex as a theme. That "serious" novels about sex like *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Lolita* recently took the best-seller lists by storm will perhaps convince the serious novelist that sex is no longer an *avant-garde* subject and that in order to avoid the middle-brow taint he must find other themes. Even the only "beat" novel on my list, *Cain's Book* by Alexander Trocchi, devotes but few pages to sex. The author's chief concerns are dope and the addict's re-

[1] CAIN'S BOOK, by *Alexander Trocchi*. Grove Press. $3.95. THE AFFAIR, by *C. P. Snow*. Scribners. $4.50. FROM THE HAND OF THE HUNTER, by *John Braine*. Houghton Mifflin. $3.75. THE LONELINESS OF THE LONG-DISTANCE RUNNER, by *Alan Sillitoe*. Knopf. $3.50. THE LEOPARD, by *Giuseppe di Lampedusa*. Pantheon. $4.50. THE PLANETARIUM, by *Nathalie Sarraute*. Braziller. $4.00 CEREMONY IN LONE TREE, by *Wright Morris*. Atheneum. $4.00. . . . OF STREETS AND STARS, by *Alan Marcus*. Manzanita Press. $5.00. THE BIG WARD, by *Jacoba van Velde*. Simon and Schuster. $3.00. HOMO FABER, by *Max Frisch*. Abelard-Schuman. $3.95. THE VIOLENT BEAR IT AWAY, by *Flannery O'Connor*. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. $3.75. AMERICAN SON, by *Francis MacManus*. Knopf. $1.75. THE MAGICIAN OF LUBLIN, by *Isaac Bashevis Singer*. Noonday. $3.50.

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lationship—if that is the right word—to society. Personally, I'd as soon read about the symptoms of dyspepsia as about the effects of dope, but at least the whole subject of addiction provides a change from sex. Not much of a change, though: all dope-taking scenes, what with hypodermic syringes, hunting for veins and the like, have a tiresomely medical flavor, just as the sex scenes in some recent novels read like accounts of major surgery. The chief *esthetic* objection to any novel about dope addicts, I feel, is that their behavior, their interests, their conversation —not to mention their area for the exercise of free will—have become too narrowly restricted by their habit. Trocchi's most interesting pages describe the maneuvering of scows about New York Harbor. His junks, one might say, are more human than his junkies.

What remains if sex is left out? Well, first of all "getting ahead," "rising in the world"—the classic theme of the classic bourgeois art form. Then birth and death, of course. And, ultimately, man's relationship to Fate or God. I shall discuss the remaining novels, by subject matter, in the order just outlined.

Getting ahead may not be easy in England, but in that small though populous country, with its relatively homogeneous culture, it is easy enough to know when one *has* gotten ahead. England's highly stratified society offers numerous ledges on which to halt and measure one's upward progress. Being a highly traditional society, too, it provides a wide variety of recognized success symbols: a fellowship at an ancient college, Fellowship of the Royal Society, knighthood, the mastership of one's college. C. P. Snow's scientists know that they have risen in the world, or haven't.

When one has risen far enough, one can afford all kinds of luxuries: justice, for instance. Lewis Eliot in *The Affair* might well measure his present status by the fact that he can defend a falsely accused young scientist, who is probably a Communist, without seriously endangering his own career. Nevertheless, he must concede that Skeffington, who belonged in the top drawer socially all his life, was Howard's first and most uncompromising defender. Skeffington, who may actually be endangering his new academic career, takes for granted a freedom of movement that Eliot has had to earn.

The Affair, like *The Masters,* deals with power, but this time the right exercise, not the attainment, of power is at issue. In the same college which provided the scene for *The Masters,* with many of the same characters still members of its society of fellows, an unjust administrative decision has been made. Again Snow carefully manipulates suspense: will the wrong be righted? In a sense it is righted, but unromantically, through a compromise; the power marshalled on each side is too evenly balanced for a clear-cut decision. Similarly, in *The Masters,* Jago, the romantic choice, was defeated in the contest for the mastership by the commonsense candidate. Things turn out, as always in Snow's books, worse than one had hoped but better than one had feared. Like a true administrator, Snow is telling the reader that one

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can't afford to be a sore loser if one wants to win the next time. Trocchi and Snow represent two valid attitudes: either reject the success game altogether or play it for all it's worth, bearing in mind always that nobody can win all the time. Most of us, indefensibly, go along with the game while we're winning and want to quit the moment we lose.

John Braine's protagonist in *From the Hand of the Hunter,* Dick Corvey, almost quits before the game has begun. A young man from an English lower-middle-class family, he is dying of T.B. in a sanitarium because he lacks the desire to live. Falling in love with a middle-middle-class nurse saves his life, but does not prevent the girl from getting engaged to a more solid citizen, ambitious and an ex-officer. Nevertheless, Dick is determined to help his father build up the little family business; after all, Evelyn isn't married yet. Onward and upward! Unfortunately for this cosy moral, by far the most vivid part of the book describes Dick's fantasy world, in which monsters called "the Vodi" lie in wait for the weak and gentle: they have doomed Dick from birth. Once Dick has outgrown his fantasy, not only the spirit but the style of Horatio Alger take over.

England being what she is, one need not either climb the ladder or step off it altogether: the only choices offered by American society. Alan Sillitoe's characters in his book of short stories, *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner,* prefer to stay on their own rung, especially the hero of the long title story. A juvenile delinquent from a shiftless family, he refuses to curry favor with the governor of the Borstal institution where he is imprisoned; instead, he deliberately and pointedly loses the cross-country race in which the Governor has backed him to win. On his long, lonely training runs he has planned this exercise of his free will; he has chosen to remain a criminal. Environment and heredity may have been responsible for his first crime, but, by God, he will be responsible for all his crimes to come. Not all of Sillitoe's characters show the same perverse integrity, but all of them possess the same free will, if they only dare to make use of it. Their problems are posed less in terms of getting ahead than of becoming more fully themselves, wherever they happen to be.

The Prince of Salina, hero of Giuseppe di Lampedusa's *The Leopard,* was born to wealth and power but makes no effort to stay ahead. He stands aside to watch his favorite nephew Tancredi climb opportunistically to power in the new Italy, by way of Garibaldi's invasion of Sicily and the Unification which followed. Tancredi marries the beautiful daughter of a rich commoner who has raised himself from among the peasants by greed, cunning and corruption. *The Leopard* recapitulates the theme of *Castle Rackrent* and *The Cherry Orchard,* with Sicily as a background in place of Ireland or Russia.

Technically, too, *The Leopard* recalls the plays of Chekhov in that most of the "important" events happen off-stage; what we see mainly consists of family snapshots from an aristocratic album: meals, family prayers, a ball, a day's hunting, a visit to a convent, a Bishop's visita-

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tion of a private chapel. The chapter in which Tancredi and his fiancee explore a huge, disused palace together but do *not* consummate their love is one of the most highly erotic passages in contemporary literature. (Sex-mongering novelists please note!) The old order is revealed, even while it is collapsing, as a beautiful thing, a genuine *order.* One almost wishes that the Prince of Salina had fought to preserve it.

Getting ahead in literary Paris is a very complex, almost metaphysical process, according to Nathalie Sarraute's *The Planetarium.* Alain Guimiez, a young critic and scholar who has married a very bourgeois wife, measures his progress by whether the great woman writer Germaine Lemaire approves or disapproves of him. Only, how can he tell what her attitude to him is or whether she is genuinely a great writer and a fine human being? The young couple's struggle to obtain an old aunt's big apartment in a fashionable neighborhood forms the main action of the novel and becomes as momentous, as charged with emotion, as Napoleon's rise to power. Is it a victory or a defeat when they are finally established in the apartment? Will the furnishings prove their culture or their Philistinism in the eyes of Germaine and her set? At the end of the book it seems that Germaine approves, even of the oval door that the aunt had had made and then regretted. Still, nothing is settled. Perhaps Germaine herself is a Philistine, after all?

Mme. Sarraute has by now perfected the fictional method she began to develop in *Tropismes.* The unnecessary narrator of *Portrait of a Man Unknown* has been eliminated. Everything is presented directly, including doubts and disappointments of which the characters themselves have not yet become fully conscious. Mme. Sarraute reminds me of Virginia Woolf or even of Jane Austen. In one sense, whatever happens in her books is insignificant and trivial; in another sense it is all of supreme significance. Putting a new door in one's apartment, having a banal conversation, asking a small favor, such things can generate all the meanings, all the emotions, of which human beings are capable; birth and copulation and death cannot stir us any more profoundly than these trivialities because we lack the mechanisms necessary for a deeper, more subtle response: such, I believe, is the philosophic attitude implicit in the novels of Mme. Sarraute. Nevertheless, one begins to wish that she would tackle birth and death—or even copulation—just once. Yet Jane Austen managed to avoid all three and still become a great novelist, a great *comic* novelist. Nathalie Sarraute is well on the way toward becoming precisely that.

A novel need not, of course, be any the less comic because it touches on death. Take Wright Morris's *Ceremony in Lone Tree:* an old man dies on his ninetieth birthday during a family reunion, just after two of his teen-age descendants have eloped and gotten married; his body is driven off to the undertaker's in the same covered wagon which sheltered his birth. These events sum up the cycle of human life—"in my end is my beginning," etc. One could imagine a portentous saga, subtitled "The Life and Death of a Nebraska Pioneer," leading up to

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these climactic happenings. But in fact Wright Morris has written what is at times a hysterically funny book. Almost all his characters are grotesques, defined by perhaps a single characteristic or traumatic experience: a stammer, the pet phrase "Sweet Jesus," the ownership of a pedigree bulldog, a mailman's uniform, a drayman's hat, a jilting forty years ago. The elaborate logistics—ditched cars, huffy departures—which make inevitable the pressing into service of the covered wagon are worked out with the constructive skill of a veteran novelist, so that one cannot deny the probability of the final symbolic scene. Everything is perfect, except that the silly old man was never more than half-alive to start with. Perhaps Mr. Morris's ironic point is that any human being, however grotesque, can become a symbol; meaning inheres in the "ceremony," the ritual, rather than in the quite inadequate persons who participate therein. The family reunion sprang from a feeling for ritual in the first place, though that gathering is represented as tiresome or painful to those present—while appearing hilariously funny to the outsider, who can observe with detachment their groping and clawing.

A first novel about Hollywood not primarily concerned with sex or even with getting ahead constitutes a portent indeed. Alan Marcus's *. . . of Streets and Stars,* quite unpretentious in spite of its elaborate private-press format, treats Los Angeles as a city in which some very ordinary people live, work and die. True, it contains the inevitable young writer new to Hollywood and the inevitable movie tycoon—known by his initials as "J.C." Nevertheless, the book's center of gravity is provided by Dora Robinson, a homely typist in the fan mail department, Dora's complaining old mother, and their neighbors the Millers, a refugee couple. Mrs. Robinson's death and Mr. Miller's growing unhappiness and insanity are counterpointed against J.C.'s death and the making of an uplifting, phony movie about refugees who find happiness in America. Mr. Marcus tends to douse all his characters with alternate pailfuls of irony and schmaltz and to make all his women speak and think in the rhythms of Molly Bloom, but he does succeed in evoking the complexity of human emotion and self-deception. Dora's mingled feelings of love and disgust as she watches her mother approach death are particularly well rendered.

To discuss novels mainly in terms of their subject matter is by no means so naive as it appears: The Novel, from its earliest days, has always remained in closer touch with life than other literary forms, and the plain man's test for a novel—"Is it true to life?"—haunts even the subtlest critics. Jacoba van Velde, in her first novel, *The Big Ward,* has presented a universal experience simply and with a certain realism. She has tried to reconstruct the feelings, memories and experiences of an old woman and her only daughter during the mother's last months in hospital. The daughter feels none of the impatience with her admirable old parent that Dora Robinson feels toward hers; one should add that Dora lives with her mother, whereas Helena makes flying visits from Paris to the bedside. After winning a prize in its author's

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native Holland, *The Big Ward* has been translated into ten languages. No doubt its countless readers have found it very simple, very true and very moving. But was it the treatment or merely the subject which moved them? Did they not project their own emotions into what they read? I fear they did. I fear that I did too. Let us admit that certain novels defy criticism, and pass on.

The notion that Fate or God plans our lives, imposing a pattern on them no matter how randomly we seem to twist and turn, is as much an esthetic concept as it is a religious one. The modern novelist finds it almost as indispensable as did the Greek tragedian because it confers form on what would otherwise be formless and therefore meaningless. Four out of our thirteen novels exploit this great esthetic device in their various ways.

Faber, the engineer protagonist of Max Frisch's *Homo Faber,* stubbornly maintains that everything which leads to his becoming, unawares, the lover of his own illegitimate daughter and indirectly causing her death is mere coincidence, explainable by the mathematics of probability. He thus justifies his author's piling up the most fantastic series of coincidences ever admitted into a modern novel. Whatever Faber may think, the reader must feel that Fate provides a more esthetically satisfying and even a more rational explanation of this series than Chance. *Homo Faber* can be read either as a tragedy (if we accept the notion of Fate) or as a *roman philosophique* (posing the problem of Fate *versus* Chance). Viewed either way, the plot remains too much of a clever gimmick for my taste.

The three remaining novels all explore the theme of religious vocation somewhat after the pattern of Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven." God may be thought of as remorselessly tracking down the protagonist to use him for His own purposes. Each novel, however, retains sufficient ambiguity to permit the skeptical reader to view the protagonist as a dupe of pure chance.

Flannery O'Connor's Tarwater has been reared to be a prophet by his great-uncle, a backwoods religious maniac. Deliberately the boy strives not to obey the old man's two chief injunctions: to bury his great-uncle rather than cremate him and to baptize an unbaptized relative, an idiot boy. Tarwater involuntarily speaks the baptismal formula even as he drowns the idiot; later he discovers that his great-uncle has been buried by a Negro, though Tarwater himself had burned down the house which he thought contained the old man's corpse. Vanquished, Tarwater heads for the city (Atlanta, presumably) to begin his career as a prophet. How this will serve the Lord, the Lord only knows. Doubtless there are asylums for the criminally insane even in Georgia, though murder, mayhem, kidnapping and arson have not aroused the curiosity of a single policeman throughout the book. In this tragedy, as in the Wright Morris comedy, all the characters are Faulknerian grotesques, including the idiot's atheist father. Whether one reads *The Violent Bear It Away* ironically or as the story of a

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genuine vocation, the realistic convention in which it is written jars too sharply against the basic improbability of the plot. Only if set in a dream world or the folklore world of Singer could this fable remain convincing after one has put down the book. I read it with breathless attention, as one reads the short stories in Miss O'Connor's *A Good Man Is Hard to Find,* but ultimately I felt cheated. No form of entertainment is less satisfying than a performance by a conjuror; once the show is over, the greater the conjuror's skill, the greater is one's dissatisfaction.

Francis MacManus plays fairer with his readers by remaining within the bounds of probability. His Irish narrator, Michael Donovan, gives us an observant, believable portrait of a very wealthy American couple, the Wades, whose only child, Terry, has run away to Europe—on a comfortable allowance. Melville Wade, a Baptist, makes his money in Chicago but lives mainly in Sante Fe, where his wife, an ex-Catholic, collects Pueblo Indian religious art. Obviously the son fears that both his possessively loving parents will devour him: his mother by enslaving his emotions, his father by planning his career. Terry is doubly vulnerable as an only child and as a polio victim whose health has been restored by his parents' anxious devotion.

Melville Wade, characteristically, has used his wealth to have Terry shadowed by a private detective, whose reports present the boy as a thorough heel. Melville keeps these reports from his wife, but shows them to Michael, who promises both parents that he will look for Terry in Ireland and try to persuade him to return home. Terry is discovered in a Dublin slum, behaving not unlike St. Francis of Assisi and trying to learn how to love God. Understandably, Michael feels inadequate to cope with this situation. Melville eventually arrives in Dublin himself; furious with Michael for not telling him that Terry was suffering from physical malnutrition (to be counterpointed against the spiritual malnutrition of his home environment?), he whisks the boy back to America. What happens after that Michael can only guess, but one can be sure that neither of the Wades will particularly like it. The net result of Terry's mission in Ireland is the rehabilitation of a drunken priest who hardly seems worth the trouble. Michael is assured, in a last ironic interview with this priest, that Terry has indeed learned to love God. No doubt the boy will become a Catholic, perhaps a priest, though Mr. MacManus has wisely avoided such a pat ending.

Curiously, the American backgrounds and characters in *American Son* carry far more conviction than their Irish counterparts, which Mr. MacManus has lived with all his life; his recent visit to the United States apparently lifted him out of a rut and sharpened his vision. I have no idea whether Isaac Bashevis Singer's Polish backgrounds, which he appears to have left for good in 1935, are authentic, nor does their authenticity matter, since *The Magician of Lublin* is conceived in the spirit of Yiddish folklore rather than that of realistic fiction. What do I know of Yiddish folklore? Nothing, except what I can see in the

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paintings of Marc Chagall. Singer has transposed into fiction Chagall's world, with its magic and miracle and fantasy, its piety and naiveté and beauty, and has added one new element, fanaticism.

Yasha Mazur, the magician of the book's title, is a Jewish Faust: a master conjuror, escape artist and acrobat, who wins countless women by his vitality and hypnotic powers, he is above all a skeptic. In spite of a sound Hebrew education, he has read and accepted most of the nineteenth-century scientific writers and rationalist philosophers. Yet he has never ceased to think of himself as a Jew. An educated Polish woman, widow of a professor, wants him to leave his Jewish wife, turn Christian and elope from Poland with her. For months Yasha has wavered in indecision. To elope requires more money than he, with his numerous mistresses and other dependents, can muster; Western Europe will eventually fall at his feet, but first he must learn its languages. Possessing all the talents necessary to a master criminal, Yasha resolves to obtain the money by a single burglary. Unaccountably, he bungles the crime, failing to obtain the money and escaping detection by sheer luck. In his absence during and after the burglary attempt, one of his mistresses commits suicide. Full of remorse, Yasha returns to his wife and to Judaism.

Convinced that he can avoid sin in no other way and stimulated by the example of Jewish holy men, Yasha has himself bricked into a cell in the yard of his home, to stay there permanently, mortifying the flesh and studying the holy books. Soon Jewish pilgrims are flocking to him from all over Poland. In the magical folklore atmosphere created by Mr. Singer such a turnabout seems not merely believable but predictable. To a culture hero such as Yasha, all things are possible. Even on the realistic plane, Yasha's hankering after Judaism, his preoccupation with God, Whose existence he refused either to affirm or to deny, prepare the reader for a *volte face*. Singer's novel is all of a piece, like those of Snow and Sarraute, but it also contains a Dionysian quality which may yet project its author beyond those two Apollonians and into the front rank of twentieth-century novelists. From a dying language and a dying cultural tradition has sprung a living talent, as vivid and fresh as that of Chagall in painting a generation before. The moral for literature is that no language and no cultural tradition should be allowed to die if it can possibly be preserved; while a tradition lives at all it is always capable of new growth.

The subject matter available to the novelist, then, remains pretty much the same as always, whether he looks for it in the mythical past or the Greenwich Village present. Almost every subject has been used before, drug addiction included. On the other hand, sure-fire subjects like sex and death and religious vocation cannot guarantee success. The most striking lesson to be learned from this quarter's novels is that there has to be some sort of harmony between subject matter and treatment: witness Flannery O'Connor's failure and Max Frisch's and perhaps Morris's, as against the achievement of Singer or Sarraute.

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BENJAMIN DE MOTT

Grading the Emanglons

HENRI MICHAUX, a barbarian who knows the road east better even than Lawrence Durrell, has some observations in one of his imaginary voyages that are worth twice the price of a NoDoz to readers just embarking on The Alexandria Quartet.[1] Michaux's subject is a tribe of Great Garaban called the Emanglons which has a passion for remoteness in art. The effects of this passion are various but consistent, and evident in all quarters. Emanglon theaters are bare of greasy actors; the latter play their parts in separate buildings from which images are transmitted to the form-loving audience by mirror-play. "Some words, that come from the ceiling, are spoken in [the actors'] names." Emanglon concert halls hide the sweating musicians in the wings. As for the stuff performed: "Their music with its dying sounds always seems to be coming through a mattress. That's what [the Emanglons] like: tenuous sounds, coming from nobody knows where, fading out every second, trembling and uncertain melodies which finish off, however, in great harmonic surfaces—wide layers suddenly outspread."

The use of this report is twofold to a man who aims to make his way uncomplainingly through *Justine* or *Balthazar*. Like every subtle definition of an enlightened audience, it raises the possibility that high art always is bewildering, and Durrell's reader needs to be reminded of this possibility if he is to keep the iron in himself from page to page. Beyond this the report, which (hostilely regarded) can stand as a characterization of a whole genre of literary confusion, offers serviceable terms for the description of Durrell's unique effects. The man's "sound," for example, is by abrupt terms tenuous and dying, sudden and voluminous; much of it issues from nobody knows where. His characters in *Justine* and *Balthazar* play to mirrors and prisms, like the Emanglon actors, and are difficult to see and hear; the words spoken in their names come down from the ceiling.[2] And, at first glance, *remote,* a key critical term in the Michaux country, seems likely to be an appropriate "positive" label for Durrell's world as well.

What but remoteness could be expected in a work set in Egypt?

[1] JUSTINE ($3.75); BALTHAZAR ($3.75); MOUNTOLIVE ($3.95); CLEA ($3.95); by *Lawrence Durrell.* Dutton.

[2] Durrell discourses at length in *Justine* and elsewhere about art, mirrors and prisms (see below), and it may as well be noted here that the preoccupation is monotonously apparent in his poetry. See "Eight Aspects of Melissa," "On Mirrors," "The Daily Mirror," "Je est un autre," "Nicosia," "Delos," "Channel," the first poem "At Alexandria," "Penelope," "Basil the Hermit," "Fangbrand," "Father Nicholas His Death," "In the Ionian," "To Ping-Kû, Asleep," "Letter to Seferis the Greek," the sixth "Letter in Darkness," etc.

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Readers of Olivia Manning or P. H. Newby will call this an ignorant question, but only Egyptians will deny that the country is far away. Mosques and muezzins do not figure in the daily experience of Everyman, and the same can be said of many other items in the opening volumes of this tetralogy—a silver Rolls with daffodil hubcaps, a Babylonian barber shop, copulations of boabs, an axe murder of a camel, a bazaar where male prostitutes are tattooed, a character who spends his life travelling on ocean liners with a perfect woman called Sabina who is made of rubber ("Sabina had a wonderful wardrobe. It was a sight to see them come into the dining room"), and a man who, when asked why he is carrying another man's head in his gamebag, replies with no humorous intention: "More troubles with Bedouin labour could have cost us a thousand trees next year. It was too much of a risk to take. Besides, he was going to poison me." But in art anything can be made familiar, and if the case were otherwise, the remoteness of *Justine* and *Balthazar* would still have to be regarded as a consequence less of matter than of manner.

The chief narrator of both books is an English writer named Darley who is situated on a Mediterranean island in the company of a person called "the child." In *Justine* Darley is setting down the truth about certain people and events known to him in years spent in Alexandria; in *Balthazar* he is reviewing *Justine* in light of "The Interlinear"—a body of suggested revisions put forward by the first reader of his manuscript, a pederast named Balthazar who knows the same people and events, and considers Darley to be wanting in perceptiveness about them. The impression given by both books is that a series of related happenings of the sort described by the word *story* no doubt exists in some *ur*-text—a work that would be as valuable to Durrell's audience as a reading knowledge of Russian is to a man who wishes to know Tolstoy in the original. But in the absence of this text, the focus seems Emanglonianly dim, and the order of significance of its objects is not easy to ascertain. (*Justine* is presumably "about" the fatal lady who bears that name, but before Justine's hour arrives another fatal lady named Melissa is given much space, a circumstance which has the effect not only of perplexing the curious reader, but of dulling his appetite for fatality.) Names turn up on the page, are sung at by the narrator, and shortly disappear—for no specified reason. Then in *Balthazar* the narrator is chided for offering a mistaken explanation of the disappearances—when, as well as can be remembered, no explanation whatever had been offered. The names themselves—Pombal, Narouz, Abu Kar, Capodistria—have great piquancy, and the words spoken to and for them are remarkably fluent. But few of the messages convey much hint of what is called the real, or of any other agent capable of disturbing the taut Garabanian air of non-existence.

Nor would it appear, to judge from the tone of the enterprise, and the dominant rhetoric, that the writer likes such disturbances. As indicated before, his stall is jammed with Gothic gimcracks: epigraphs from

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Sade, a stolen child, man-eating birds, poisonings, hat-pin murders, vampires, religious frenzies, houses of child prostitution, circumcision spectacles, visions, lepers, bullwhips—not to speak again of the extraordinary gallery of fatal women. (A. is consumptive and smokes hashish; B. has her fine face destroyed by the pox; C. is raped as a child; D. has an abortion and afterward a harpoon tears off her hand.) And like most barkers of this stock Durrell prefers to speak in the unreal idiom of romance. He is faithful not only to the cliché ("Truth will out," "They drifted apart") and the "short ironic" laugh and sob, but also to the breathless leading question ("And Clea, what of her?" "And Scobie, what of him?" "And Pursewarden?" "Ah, Pursewarden . . ."). And as often as not the leading questions lead only to passages of *sententiae* and *profundum* (" 'Every man,' [Justine] writes elsewhere, and here I can hear the hoarse and sorrowful accents of her voice repeating the words as she writes them; 'Every man is made of clay and daimon, and no woman can nourish both' "), or to an Expressionist tableau:

> I turned my head to look at Justine. She was holding up her wrists at me, her face carved into a grimace. She held them joined together as if by invisible manacles. She exhibited these imaginary handcuffs for a long moment before dropping her hands back into her lap, and then, abruptly, swift as a snake, she crossed to the divan where I lay and sat down at my feet, uttering as she did so, in a voice vibrating with remorseful resentment, the words: "Why Darley? O *why?*"

The aversion here revealed to palpable presences—or at least to the sort of speech and narrative line that help to create them—also appears in *Mountolive* and *Clea,* the third and fourth volumes of the tetralogy, though in these books attempts are made to disguise it. Durrell speaks slightingly of *Mountolive* as a "straight naturalistic novel"—and, in an idiom less fretted than that of *Justine* and *Balthazar,* it does tell a story rather than hide one. *(Clea* functions to restore a measure of muddle to the events that Mountolive sharply defines, but it too is more available as a narrative than the first volumes.) The story in question deals with a young English diplomat who is sent to a Coptic family to master Arabic early in his career. He becomes the lover of the great lady of the family, a Westernized figure who educates him not only in her culture, but to the best in European thought and art, thus releasing him from the dungeon of Englishness. Mountolive leaves Egypt to pursue his career from Moscow to Lisbon, engages in an intense correspondence with the Coptic lady over the years, and at length returns to Egypt as ambassador. The lady can no longer be his lover; she is old and her beauty is destroyed. More important, her sons are involved in an anti-British intrigue. Their machinations are first denied, then acknowledged, by Mountolive's friend Pursewarden, a character whose reputation as a writer and seer adds significance to his peculiar stance of neutrality in the struggle between East and West. And the effort to comprehend this stance, as well as to frustrate the plans of his former Coptic

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friends without denying the truth of his own nature, plunges Mountolive into a generativity crisis as the book ends.

The character of this crisis testifies that Durrell is attempting, in *Mountolive,* to "place" his exotic world by using it as an agent of initiation for an un-exotic head, a means by which the inhibited heart can be opened to life. And in the opening and closing scenes of the novel, discarding the mirrors in service elsewhere, he works up two events—a fish drive in the waterways near Alexandria and a Coptic wake—with a power which, though it can be described by Michaux's (again oddly useful) phrases about "great harmonic surfaces—wide layers suddenly outspread," has too reverberant and sustained a connection with violent reality to please an Emanglon audience. But as already indicated these events do not control the book's tone. The latter is established early on by an idolatrous presentation of the Foreign Office, a radiantly neat institution that in these pages seems more like fairyland, or a stainless steel kitchen in *McCall's,* than a human production.[3] And as the book develops, the fantasticating influence of the otherworldly bureaucracy is intensified by Durrell's arbitrary manipulation of his fable—a spy tale with operatic interludes.

Evidence of manipulation is everywhere visible. In *Balthazar* a Coptic rich man marries a fatal Jewess; his reason for doing so, according to the reporting intelligence of the moment, is that he is passionately in love with the lady. In *Mountolive* his reason is differently described; according to the reporting intelligence of that book, his purpose in marrying is to strengthen his hand in anti-British negotiations with Palestine. (As a Coptic, a Christian, the man believes that he will lessen Palestinian suspicion if he takes a Jewish wife.) The motives are revealed during a telephone conversation—the same conversation in each volume. In *Balthazar* the words spoken are reported as follows:

> Nessim [the rich man] took the lift up to his office, and sitting down at his desk wrote upon a card the following words: "My dearest Clea, Justine has agreed to marry me. I could never do this if I thought it would qualify or interfere in any way with either her love for you or mine . . ." Then, appalled by the thought that whatever he might write to Clea might sound mawkish, he tore the note up and folded his arms. After a long moment of thought he picked up the polished telephone and dialled Capodistria's number. "Da Capo" he said quietly. "You remember my plans for marrying Justine? All is well." He replaced the receiver slowly, as if it weighed a ton, and sat staring at his own reflection in the polished desk.

In *Mountolive* the conversation is reported as follows:

> It was some hours later, when he was sitting at his desk, that Nessim after a long moment of thought, picked up the polished telephone

[3] The same idolatry is evident in Durrell's funnybooks—*Esprit de Corps* and *Stiff Upper Lip,* complacent chirpings about diplomats.

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> and dialled Capodistria's number. "Da Capo," he said quietly, "you remember my plans for marrying Justine? All is well. We have a new ally. I want you to be the first to announce it to the committee. I think now they will show no more reservation about my not being a Jew—since I am to be married to one. What do you say?"

This finagling with motives may not please traditionalists—but low-brow Emanglons, schooled to scorn the notion that serious writers do not withhold information for cheap reasons, are likely to find it as much to their taste as the mysterious music of *Justine*. And this in itself confirms the original assertion, that the ostensibly "naturalistic" parts of The Alexandria Quartet are only a shade less attractive to (undemanding) admirers of remoteness than those that are ostensibly "experimental."

The phrase just used, "lowbrow Emanglons," requires accounting, even though (like the critical reception of The Quartet itself) it is in fact only another object thrown up by the tides of present taste. Years ago *all* Emanglons were hateful, and easy to mock. Critics regularly dealt damnation round by compiling catalogues of monstrosities and unrealities (see above), as though the presence of these items in the work at their hand were definite proof of crime. The situation is different now: faced with ten million, fictional, lipreader's guides—to Washington, D. C., the Kinsey counter, Redbrick U., and the like—people have not only had to cease pretending to be confounded by enthusiasm for the remote, they have had to recognize that many certified masterpieces are marked by monstrosities—melodramatic over-intensity, picturesque speech, anti-novelism, febrile clichés, and stories that like skittish schoolgirls hesitate to show their figures. This transformation of bias, though rapidly accomplished and reasonably desirable, has led to excesses. Eagerness to look sharp (or Emanglon), hesitancy about speaking a philistine word against limp aestheticism and gothic obscurity, astonishment that one or another writer aims to be more than a lipreader's guide—these have combined to discourage criticism from asking the old homely questions about the relative integrity of the work offered, its luck at divination, the freshness of its seeing. Behind the reluctance stands a commendable distaste for what Wyndham Lewis called "the taxi-cab driver test for fiction," but, as is obvious, distaste is not taste. All Emanglon art is "remote from life," but some of it inevitably is bad art; no Emanglon can be a true lipreader in the American and English sense, but—and here is the justification for the phrase cited—some Emanglons can be low-brows, able to appreciate "surfaces," but unable to distinguish between "great harmonic surfaces" and Congoleum.

The relevance of these observations to admirers of Durrell is easy to specify. The latter claim that poetry has been absent from the novel for years—which, at a certain level, is true. And they argue that Durrell has brought poetry back to the form—which, at a certain level, is also

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true. But at what level? *Justine* and *Balthazar* have interest as an indication of what *Aureng-Zebe* would be like if it were rewritten by a post-Lawrentian, in the manner of Pater, to be played underwater—and to say this is to grant that both books possess unusual literary, or poetical qualities: but the qualities are not admirable. Durrell is chockablock with imagery, indeed the principle of his employment of images is that of the saturation air raid of other times—but the reader, though given opportunities to admire flames and explosions in other neighborhoods, ultimately is numbered among the maimed. The poetry that Durrell brings back, in short, is bad poetry—an item which despite its power to stimulate the opportunistic is of slight value. Again: it is claimed that Durrell has given fiction some of its old substance as an instrument of thought, that he fills his pages with intellection of a weight and passion unequaled by any recent novelist. The measure of truth in this contention is, as in the previous instance, not contemptible. Novelists rarely concern themselves directly nowadays with metaphysics or epistemology, and Durrell does concern himself with these subjects: he is, as it were, always thinking. Regrettably, though, he is not a first-rate thinker. The burden of intellection in his first volumes rests upon commonplace observations about the fictive nature of human life, and in *Mountolive* and *Clea,* where most of the thinking is done by the great writer, Pursewarden, the substance of the ideas, if any, is buried in Blakeian prophetics and Irish (or elves and fairies division) Lawrentianism. The culmination of the argument appears in *Clea,* where thirty pages are devoted to "revolutionary" ravings like these:

> The miracle is there, on ice so to speak. One fine day it will blossom: then the artist suddenly grows up and accepts the full responsibility for his origins in the people, and when *simultaneously* the people recognise his peculiar significance and value, and greet him as the unborn child in themselves, the infant Joy! I am certain it will come. At the moment they are like wrestlers nervously circling one another, looking for a hold. But when it comes, this great blinding second of illumination—only then shall we be able to dispense with hierarchy as a social form. The new society—so different from anything we can imagine now—will be born around the small strict white temple of the infant Joy! Men and women will group themselves around it, the proto-plasmic growth of the village, the town, the capital! Nothing stands in the way of this Ideal Commonwealth, save that in every generation the vanity and laziness of the artist has always matched the self-indulgent blindness of the people. But prepare, prepare! It is on the way. It is here, there, nowhere!
>
> The great schools of love will arise, and sensual and intellectual knowledge will draw their impetus from each other. The human animal will be uncaged, all his dirty cultural straw and coprolitic refuse of belief cleaned out. And the human spirit, radiating light and laughter, will softly tread the green grass like a dancer; will

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emerge to cohabit with the time-forms and give children to the world of the elementaries—undines and salamanders, sylphs and sylvestres, Gnomi and Vulcani, angels and gnomes.

The final upper-Emanglon claim advanced for Durrell is that he stands forth as an innovator, a man who is unwilling to accept the dull status quo of contemporary fictional art. And for this claim something can again be said: unlike most novelist, Durrell does put his work forward as a major literary experiment. His text is littered with methodological self-surveys in which (as already indicated) mirrors, prisms and other Emanglon props figure prominently:

> I remember her sitting before the multiple mirrors at the dressmaker's, being fitted for a shark-skin costume, and saying: "Look! five different pictures of the same subject. Now if I wrote I would try for a multi-dimensional effect in character, a sort of prism-sightedness. Why should not people show more than one profile at a time?" *(Justine)*

> No, but seriously . . . you might try a four-card trick in the form of a novel; passing a common axis through four stories, say, and dedicating each to one of the four winds of heaven. A continuum, forsooth, embodying not a temps retrouvé but a temps délivré. The curvature of space itself would give you stereoscopic narrative, while human personality seen across a continuum would perhaps become prismatic? Who can say? I throw the idea out. (*Clea*)

And the preface to *Balthazar* explains the experiment with precision:

> Modern literature offers us no Unities, so I have turned to science and am trying to complete a four-decker novel whose form is based on the relativity proposition. Three sides of space and one of time constitute the soup-mix recipe of a continuum. The four novels follow this pattern . . . . The subject-object relation is so important to relativity that I have tried to turn the novel through both subjective and objective modes . . . . This is not Proustian or Joycean method—for they illustrate Bergsonian "Duration" in my opinion, not "Space-Time."

The difficulty about all this is that Durrell's remarks reflect an obliviousness, infrequent among true innovators, to the whole line of investigation carried on by major novelists since the beginning of this century, few of whom have been satisfied with "one profile at a time." To be sure, the problem would not matter if the books themselves were felt to be new in method or scheme, if their use of multiple points of view seemed significantly fresh. But the sense of genuine technical invention is lacking in this work from the beginning; the prime use of the methodological pronouncements seems to be that of encouraging innocent readers to respect as an experiment what is actually no more than a mismanagement of an already familiar narrative method.

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The painful truth thus suggested is that even the invocation of Emanglon standards, which celebrate (not condemn) confusion and monstrosities of the kind described above, fails to validate the large claims made for the author of The Quartets as a novelist, experimenter, seer, and baroque painter. Durrell's language has no taint of the non-fiction novelist's drabness, but its complications smell more of vulgar "poetical" pretentiousness than of ambitious effort to arrive at difficult, encompassing truths. His study of the illicit and the ugly is not pornographic, and is often informative, but what it lays open is a scab of local self-contempt rather than the heart of a universal corruption. The possibility that his work as a whole should be thought of as a long anti-novel, a purposeful or Dada-ist mingling of styles, indicates the range of its potential interest—but the possibility is undercut by the absence of the note of amused self-awareness that lends authority to such productions. At their best his ideas *are* ideas, but since they are available elsewhere and since in his preachment of them Durrell is frequently hysterical, he does not qualify as an original or subtle mind. His belief that the need is urgent for a new formula of psychic health is unexceptionable, but since his tone is sickly and his preoccupations mean, he himself seems little more than a symptom of the wretchedness he bemoans. He is remote—this bears repeating: but in failing to comprehend that the end of remoteness is, ideally, the defeat of vulgarity, pretension, and private agony, he links himself only with the commoners of the Emanglon tribe, whose preference for the far-out is cant.

To say this much is not to deny that *Mountolive* is a readable novel with a brilliant opening chapter, and that moments of power occur at intervals in all four books, and that in conception the whole work raises extraordinary hopes. (Though the English need for a successful imaginative novelist, an alternative to the flatness of C. P. Snow and to the weary rhythm and blues of the aging Angries, is particularly acute, whole continents share it.) Neither is it to pretend that readable novels can be brought to general attention at present unless accompanied by volumes of notes for other novels, theories, ramshackle intellection, and murmurings from Cyril Connolly about "the spirit of Alexandria, sensual and skeptical, self-torturing and passionate." (Reviewers unprovided with such suggestions of momentousness cannot invoke the mighty names and huge accomplishments of the past which alone rouse apathetic audiences.) But these concessions and allusions to sociology do little to support the enthusiast who sets Durrell in the company of Proust or Conrad, and not much more to justify the sympathetic critic who attempts to place him honorably among the Emanglons. The terms of the latter tribe probably are narrow, precious, insubstantial—"useless for Shakespeare." But the standard they raise, as even the most reluctant and tentative testings of The Alexandria Quartet seem bound to suggest, is a good deal higher than lowbrow aesthetes and four-card tricks in the form of novels are ever likely to reach.

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GERALD WEALES

Whatever Happened to Jean-Paul Sartre?

IN ONE OF THE *Shoestring Reviews* there was a number in which the chorus did an elaborate tango to a song, the words of which might have been pieced together from the remembering conversation of movie lovers whose first passion was more than two decades old, who wondered what had become of Rochelle Hudson, of Bobby Breen. I was reminded of that song when I fished from my mailbox the new collection of plays by Jean-Paul Sartre[1] and carried it, uncovered, down the hallway to my office. A dozen years ago such a burden would have caused excitement—well, genuine interest, at least. Today, mild curiosity, obvious indifference. I was tempted to sweep one of my colleagues into my arms—an absurd if not an existential act—and tango to my destination, chanting, *Whatever happened to Rochelle Hudson, whatever happened to Jean-Paul Sartre?*

By now it is a commonplace of mass-circulation sociology that American culture, whatever continuity and solidity it may have at its base, is on the surface a changing pattern of fads and enthusiasms. It has become almost impossible for the American intellectual (the man who insists on the label the way the Shriner insists on his hat) to cling to the old pose that he is above the impulse that has recently put Fabian on the front of fan magazines and stereo equipment into living rooms. He knows that he has to have seen the movies of Ingmar Bergman and the *nouvelle vague,* to have attended the plays of Beckett and Ionesco, to have read the beats and the angries, if only to condemn. Literary booms are as artificial as those in show business and the clothing industry, and their pattern is as easy to follow. A single work attracts attention for some reason—its quality, its rightness for a particular moment, its eccentricity—and stirs up comment—analyses in the quarterlies, reviews in the weeklies, attacks often in the large-circulation magazines and the newspapers. The comment in its turn forces the publishers, the play producers, the film distributors to present more works by the same author (or the same group), which proliferation increases the comment and changes its nature—attacks in the quarterlies, articles in the weeklies discussing the phenomenon of the new success, favorable notices in the large-circulation magazines and the newspapers. The increased comment in its turn . . . and so it goes until the saturation point is reached, until the new fad dies of what the television boys, every time they bury a new comedian, call

[1] THE DEVIL AND THE GOOD LORD AND TWO OTHER PLAYS, by *Jean-Paul Sartre.* Knopf. $5.00.

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over-exposure. The object of all the excitement, the recipient of all the applause, his bubble burst, is forced then into a decline as artificial as his rise. In time, when he has ceased to be a fashionable success and an ex-fashionable success, he reaches the point where someone may finally look at his work for its own sake.

The Sartre boom was a kind of classic. Talk about him and his existentialism got to this country before his works did, smuggled in, one supposes, in the barracks bags of returning literate GIs. After the Broadway production of *No Exit* in 1946, a commercial failure and a critical success (it won the Drama Circle award for the best foreign play of the year), the sluice gates were opened and the deluge began. Between 1947 and 1949 more than a dozen books by Sartre were published —novels, plays, stories, film scripts, philosophical works, literary criticism. All of his plays were performed in New York. Erwin Piscator's group at the New School did *The Flies* in 1947; during 1948, New Stages, one of the first of the ambitious post-war off-Broadway groups, presented *The Victors,* Thornton Wilder's adaptation of *Morts sans sépulture,* and *The Respectful Prostitute,* which moved uptown and became a Broadway hit; a version of *Les mains sales,* called *Red Gloves,* played on Broadway for three months, over the protests of Sartre, who disowned it. For three years, everyone wore Sartre in his buttonhole. It was impossible to open a journal of any kind without running into Sartre as author or Sartre as subject. College students, the reading variety, clutched Sartre volumes as they hurried across campuses to coffee klatches where everyone declared himself an existentialist. Anyone who was anyone read the first volumes of *Roads to Freedom,* which Knopf still calls "his famous tetralogy" although the fourth novel has yet to be written. Then, the bandwagon began to run down. Between 1950 and 1956 only five books by Sartre were published, partly because his early work had been pretty much worked over (the Philosophical Library should be able to mine a few more volumes out of his *Situations*), but mainly because the Sartre market was bearish. None of his plays of the fifties managed a New York production and only now, with this new collection, are they being published in this country.

Sartre's roller-coaster career as a borrowed American art-and-idea hero is so neat an example of the boom-and-bust course of our imported intellectual enthusiasms that he might be labeled Example A and forgotten. It is possible, however, to make a few guesses about why he should have had the success of the late forties and the relative decline of the fifties. His work was the first European work to come to us after the end of World War II. Since it came from France, it carried an automatic seal of approval, the one that became current in the twenties when the expatriates invented (or accepted) the myth that Paris was the cultural capital of the world, a myth, incidentally, which still has vitality despite the fact that the provincialism of French intellectuals has been smothering it for years. But Sartre's work not only evoked old loyalties to the France of Gide and Cocteau, but new loyal-

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ties to the French Resistance movement, the New France in the making.

Beyond the happy national label, Sartre brought a supposedly new philosophy, one which could be used as excuse or banner, depending on the user's particular psychological and philosophical set. The freedom of the existential hero became, for some people, particularly for those who knew Sartre's ideas only by reputation, a kind of license, a lifting of moral restraint, a downpayment a decade early on the big beatnik sell that was to be the noisiest domestic product of the fifties. On the other hand, the freedom of the existential hero, which included the necessity for each man to create himself and to bear the responsibility for his creation, could be seen and was seen as a positive philosophy, a road by which a man might make his tough way through a world which God had deserted and in which the economic and psychological determinisms could no longer be used as excuses. I still feel a sense of excitement at the end of *The Flies* when Orestes steps down from Apollo's protective pedestal and strides off, carrying the guilt of the city on his back, having made a real Orestes of himself by acting and demanding the responsibility for his own act. In the years right after the war, the brief period of hope that carried the United Nations in its womb, there was a suspicion that political action could make a new world. As the ideals of the French Resistance carried over into the first awakening of post-war France, so the sense of working together—brotherhood *is* the word—managed to stay alive briefly in a world at peace. So, in the late forties, the political Sartre was as acceptable as the philosophic Sartre or the French Sartre. Then, too, there was the artistic Sartre. Whatever final verdict one wants to bring in on the merit of the man's work, there is little doubt that that work, particularly the plays, was provocative when it first appeared. In sum, success.

After the boom, the lowering of it. The intellectual climate of the early fifties was something else again. There is no need really to bring up the late Senator McCarthy—although Sartre probably would—for McCarthy, who once seemed to be an important force, has become, in retrospect, a by-product. Anti-Communism, which was a meal-ticket to the McCarthies, was a fact to most American intellectuals, even to those who disowned the Senator and refused to proclaim themselves New Conservatives. The time was no longer ripe for the political Sartre and the spectacle of his own twistings and turnings in relation to the French Communists made him even less palatable. New American attitudes helped create new European attitudes, and the kind of imbecile anti-Americanism represented by Simone de Beauvoir's *America Day by Day* rubbed off on Sartre. Finally, his celebrated quarrel with Albert Camus, which, as Herbert Luethy said in *France Against Herself,* was not really understandable outside Paris literary circles, was settled on this side of the Atlantic in Camus' favor, and Sartre's old Resistance colleague was taken up—less flamboyantly, it is true—in his place.

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The changing political climate was, however, not the most important contribution to the decline of Sartre. There were philosophic and artistic forces at work. The success of Sartre's existentialism was its executioner. Serious students went back to Sartre's sources, embraced Kierkegaard and flirted with Heidegger; the Christian existentialists, from Marcel to Tillich, stole some of Sartre's thunder in the face of what was once and briefly called a religious revival. Those humanists who had been finding in Sartre their own image of responsible man suddenly saw existentialists on every bush. When I read a speech of Judge Learned Hand in which he talked about making his own motley, I knew that he and Sartre's Orestes were brothers and that I had come home to a tradition as old as Western culture. If the freshness had worn off the philosophy, how much more it had worn off the literature. Giraudoux and Anouilh finally found their places on the American stage; Beckett, Ionesco, Genêt were introduced. Although none of these playwrights is like Sartre, they detracted from his uniqueness. Sartre had almost been French literature and philosophy in the late forties; by the fifties one could pick and choose.

What of the three plays in the new volume? those which have only now been picked and chosen—for publication in this country? As is usual with Sartre's plays, all three of them are concerned, directly or indirectly, with his philosophy; each one, in its way, deals with the problem of identity, the protagonist's assumption of a role which may become him as he plays it, appearance become actuality. Despite the ideational similarity, each of the three plays retains its structural, its generic individuality. *The Devil and the Good Lord,* set in Germany at the beginning of the Reformation, is philosophic discussion masking as historical chronicle; *Kean* is an adaptation from Alexandre Dumas which retains a hint of its romantic origins; *Nekrassov* is political satire that calls itself farce.

The most ambitious of the plays, *The Devil and the Good Lord,* seems to me the least interesting and the least successful. Like *The Flies,* it is an existential parable, but unlike the early play, it fails to provide a hero whose metaphysical struggle is also a human one. Goetz's long quarrel with God and the weapons he uses, the attempts to achieve absolute evil and absolute good, place him in a world of abstraction, like that of Camus' Caligula, which sex and slaughter, war and wild flowers cannot make real. In the last act Goetz finally realizes that "Silence is God. Absence is God. God is the loneliness of man." Having worked his way to the despair of existential freedom, Goetz is ready to become imperfect man in a universe that does not judge him; only then can he lead the Peasants' Revolt, become a butcher again, but this time for men not against God. The point is made; the lecture is over. Although there are a few strikingly theatrical scenes—part of Sartre's early success with *No Exit* and *The Respectful Prostitute* came surely from his inclination for arresting situations—the end result is the feeling that one has read a serious play,

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but not necessarily a good one. The general pedagogical tone of the piece is heightened by the fact that it deals not only with Goetz's troubles with God, but with the political problems of *Dirty Hands*—how much can one lie to a man for his own good—and in terms that suggest the tactics of contemporary revolutionary parties.

In *Kean,* Sartre has retained Dumas' romantic story in which, with the help of the Prince of Wales, the actor saves the good name of the Danish ambassador's wife, and he has even out-Dumased Dumas by transferring Kean's passionate collapse on stage from a scene from *Romeo and Juliet* to one from *Othello.* Sartre has used the story for its own purposes, however; he has made very explicit the problem of identity implicit in the Dumas play when Kean, unhappy in love, cries out, "Je ne suis pas Romeo . . . Je suis Falstaff. . . ." Sartre's play is primarily an intellectual comedy which retains the grand gestures of the original, a pleasure in their own right, and heightens that pleasure by making Kean continually aware that he is gesturing. A happy marriage of Dumas and Anouilh.

The most startling play in the volume is *Nekrassov.* It is often very funny, and the idea of Sartre being funny—except by accident—is something of a surprise. The play is a blending of slapstick and satire that suggests Nigel Dennis in *Cards of Identity.* The plot concerns a swindler who pretends to be a high Soviet official seeking refuge in France, where his revelations give Sartre a chance to attack the rightist press and the professional anti-Communists. If that were all there were to it, the play would be no more interesting than any quickly dated political quarrel, but beyond the immediate satirical situation—the pamphleteer's concern—the play kids the whole idea of deception and self-deception. Behind the kidding of course—but lightly, lightly—lies the hero's existential problem, whether he should create himself Georges de Valéra, master criminal, or Nekrassov, professional turncoat; at one point, he even makes a Sartrian declaration, "Good and evil, I take it all upon myself. I am responsible for everything." These philosophical echoes do no harm to *Nekrassov,* but there is one obvious weakness in the play. No farce can withstand sentimentality and as soon as the farceur begins to go soft, so does the play. Sartre fails with Véronique, the Communist heroine, and with the problem of the two off-stage leftist editors who are willing to go to jail for their cause; whenever Véronique appears or her friends are mentioned the play goes sticky. For most of the way *Nekrassov* rises above the political occasion that brought it forth, plays with human weakness rather than political error, but Sartre fails finally to differentiate between the two and in the end his own allegiance (as always, a temporary one) reduces *Nekrassov* to a partisan pamphlet. But a funny one.

None of the three plays is likely to convince anyone that Sartre is a great playwright, but all of them testify that he is a versatile one.

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VERNON YOUNG

Two Panoramas of Film Art[1]

If, by virtue of its selections and the reasons therefore, an anthology is as much a judgment of experience as the items it anthologizes, Daniel Talbot, compiler of *Film: An Anthology,* signs, seals and delivers himself as an amateur of the most presumptuous variety. "This book stems from several years of pleasurable reading in libraries and museums." Several *weeks* would have sufficed for the reading, and it's at once noteworthy that Talbot doesn't claim the primary qualification for his task: several years of perceptive film-watching. There must be a host of New Yorkers who, like Talbot, had childhood fun going to the neighborhood movie and who, by dint of continuous saturation, have a garrulous if piebald acquaintance with the subject. But inveterate moviegoing and (in Talbot's case) a job at Warner Brothers don't constitute critical authority, and "pleasurable reading" butters no parsnips. Who and what but Simon and Schuster has given Talbot the authority not only to *collect* for publication articles and extracts on the subject of film art but also to edit the judgments therein expressed and to urge his own—consistently sophomoric—on the reader? Talbot, whose outlook is confined, does have views. Yes, indeed. And he imposes them unfailingly, with introductory assertions and footnotes, and with editorial pressure in the bibliography. The reader is scarcely permitted an evaluation unaided. "It is one of the earliest significant comments on the aesthetics of the film." ". . . one of the more important art histories of recent times." "It is one of the most outstanding books on film theory and aesthetics." ". . . one of the classic texts in film literature." "This is the leading international film magazine." "This is the leading magazine on the film in America today." These represent a lean sampling of the promotional monomania which characterizes Talbot's sponsorship (to say nothing of his "style").

Guidance is a legitimate instrument of the knowing anthologist. Talbot's sweeping superlatives, as well as his slanders, would be justifiable only if, having a pulse of his own, he had then covered the field of film criticism internationally and with due regard to the essential issues. There are no radical discoveries in this book, no challenges to the orthodoxy of opinion among "film people" (notably on the subject of haloes), no organization of material which might have been visible testimony to a personal standard. *Classification* is another matter and one with which Talbot seems to have experienced unnecessary difficulty.

[1] FILM: AN ANTHOLOGY, edited and compiled by *Daniel Talbot*. Simon and Schuster. $8.50. THE JAPANESE FILM: ART AND INDUSTRY, by *Joseph I. Anderson* and *Donald Richie*. With a foreword by *Akira Kurasawa*. Charles E. Tuttle Co., Rutland, Vermont. Tokyo, Japan. $7.50. Available in paperback as an Evergreen Book. Grove Press. $2.95.

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Certain selections of an analytical nature, all of them inevitable to a moderately informed survey (and by way of American publication only), are compiled tidily under "Theory and Technique." Elsewhere the categories fray out in a mystifying way (e.g. "Aesthetics, Social Commentary and Analysis"); however, they do serve as catch-alls wherein we may be grateful for such unexpected pleasures as Margaret Kennedy's "The Mechanized Muse," looseleaf but vital with intelligence, and Pauline Kael's brittle polemic, "Movies, The Desperate Art," reprinted from a paperback magazine. I call these unexpected because they are lively departures from the officially condoned points of view which Talbot confessedly favors (note the familiar panegyrics on Griffith, Flaherty and Ford) and are poles of sensibility removed from the outrages of Erwin Panofsky and Henry Miller, for which Talbot inexcusably provides reprint space and explicit approval. (In fact, Miss Kael's attack on almost everybody makes inferential mincemeat of such inclusions.) The provenance of all the portentous film criticism in our time which finds Man-and-the-Machine myths in every gag or hack sequence of Chaplin, Mack Sennett, the Marx Brothers, Tati, et al., may well be found in an essay-length footnote to Panofsky's claptrap lecture, "Style and Medium in the Moving Pictures." Reprinted twelve years after its original occasion (to stimulate interest in MMA's Film Library), it then displayed, according to our M.C., "no change in the author's basic tenets, nor does he see any reason to change them today."

Some species of courage outlaw admiration. No basic *tenets* can be discovered in the Panofsky lecture. Quite simply (in motivation only) it was an attempt, on Panofsky's part, to importune rich highbrows by specious comparisons of the motion picture with the gravure art of Albrecht Durer and with Gothic cathedrals (!); the vocabulary employed was calculated to impress—or at least to galvanize—any physicists, semanticists or "social scientists" who may have dropped by out of curiosity. Knock on any door and out pops "principle of coexpressibility," "preternaturally symbolic" or "The medium of the movies is physical reality as such. . . ." Talbot remains galvanized. "The following essay is one of the most important statements yet made on film aesthetics. Precisely and compactly written—" (Better to cut from closeup to a travelling shot!). "What makes his approach so vital are [*sic*] the constant comparative references to artistic productions of all kinds in epochs and civilisations gone by." After this it may be no surprise to encounter Henry Miller's "The Golden Age," perhaps the second most pernicious exercise in film criticism ever published (ostensible subject: Dali and Bunuel's *L'Age d'or*), typical, needless to add, of the Miller principles of composition, to be elucidated by reference to Krafft-Ebing rather than to Coleridge.

Talbot's best friend will be the neutral reader who just wants a bedside companion. Film-literature anthologies are such rare events that the innocent bystander will surely find something with which he isn't familiar in this one. Among the Unarguable classics are the pieces by

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Susanne Langer and Parker Tyler (each a metaphysical unity, aesthetically fortified), Pudovkin's ABC of film construction, Arnheim's lucid exposition, the "service features" on Melies and Griffith, Seymour Stern's enduring diatribe against Hollywood (which Talbot deprecates as "enraged frustration"), James Agee on "Comedy's Greatest Era," and the contributions of Misses Kennedy and Kael, as noted above. The remainder of the volume (about three-fourths) is readable in varying degrees, but little of it is irreplaceable. At the price of $8.50, this haphazard little-treasury-making isn't to the point, is it? After 48 years (let's say) of serious film production, *globally,* certain subjects, personalities, mutations of style and of critical opinion demand attention or revision. Even if unwittingly, an anthologist is an historian, and the editing of history implies responsible evaluation. From Talbot's index you can quickly verify the fact that in a volume purported to be "A Diverse Collection of Outstanding Writing on Various Aspects of the film published from 1923 to 1957" (they might have rhymed it!), there is no single essay on the Swedish, the Italian or the Japanese film: not a word on the achievement of Victor Sjostrom (one false ascription in Sadoul's chapter), Arne Sucksdorff, Alf Sjoberg (one incensed parenthesis on *Miss Julie* from Miss Kael), Ingmar Bergman, Cesare Zavattini, Federico Fellini, Jiri Trnka, Kurasawa or Mizoguchi! Two sneers in one essay by Manny Farber, and one *faux pas* from Sadoul, acknowledge the existence of Vittorio De Sica. And the pioneering craft of the German visionaries (Paul Wegener, Guido Zeeber, Carl Mayer) is, as usual, restricted to Kracauer's oblique and surly account. Deficient in pertinent material, devoid of any articulate standard, Talbot's anthology is a cynical concession by Simon and Schuster to the prevailing loss of integrity among American publishers.

Talbot has no subject. Anderson and Richie suppressed theirs. The gist of it is perfectly stated by Margaret Kennedy: "the greatest advantage of the screen medium is a power which it shares with poetry to fuse humanity with its setting, to charge even inanimate objects with emotional significance." Although this fusion is implied again and again as the singular asset of the Japanese film, the authors, except in brief encounters, never squarely confront it. Subtitled "Art and Industry," Anderson and Richie's book is seven-eighths concerned with the industry. If the reader early recognizes that intensive appraisal is not the authors' exclusive intention, he should enjoy what he has purchased: a contribution to social history. I'd not have introduced an alternative prospect if Anderson and Richie had not misled me with their subtitle, with interpretative feints and with their dedicatory prefix: "to that little band of men who have tried to make the Japanese film industry what every film industry should be: a director's cinema." *The Japanese Film* may well be *dedicated* to that "little band," comprising in the main nine heroes of the congested, comic epic which is Japanese film-making, but the predominant subject is the *occupational conditions* within which the nine have waged their creative battles. One

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might be disappointed at the process rather than the end-product receiving the lion's share of elucidation, since in respect to the *essence* of Japanese film we're in dire need of revelations from the source. But this is the book which Anderson and Richie—or their publishers—thought more important to launch, and it will no doubt be the basic reference for some years to come.

Entailing the rise and vicissitudes of Japanese film production, this history details, *en route,* an abundance of copy regarding capital investment, company mergers, finance manoeuvers and the like, much of which has value only for the statistician. From the mass of data an outline emerges, like a grotesque genie from a smoking lamp, horribly akin to that of mass-enterprise film-making anywhere. The shape and features of this genie, however, are thoroughly fantastic, simply because the environment of its origin is alien to us; even Hollywood has not witnessed the physical violence which Anderson and Richie report as the consequence of the one crisis in recent years. To read this volume in sequence is comparable to watching a rather confusing newsreel wherein a feverish interplay of masses and individuals, never reconciled, is modified, often abruptly, by events "off screen": World War I; invasion by the American movie; the Tokyo earthquake; the imperialist resurgence; invasion by sound films and of Manchuria; War II, The Bomb, and the subsequent *harakiri* of the Japanese soul. Throughout, the authors' panorama of the industry is a disclosure of professional chaos, creative frustration, witless judgment, opportunism at high tempo and a continually frantic annexation of foreign-film stereotypes.

The impact of Russia and the West has been perennial, through such diverse channels as the novels of Dostoievsky and Tolstoi, Soviet analytical montage, the films of Chaplin and of Douglas Fairbanks, some of René Clair, and a miscellany of kitsch including *The Covered Wagon, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Broken Blossoms* and *Duel in the Sun.* The more-or-less pure Japanese film developed after 1923 and sharp distinctions have always reigned (at least in the terminology) between one type of period film and another, between period films as a whole and recent-or-contemporary-subject films, and between Japanese and foreign elements within a film (from the musical score to the "psychology"). As you might expect, the authors are expert when separating out the genres of Japanese movie and tracing the wild cross-currents which have shaped the torrential Japanese output. They discriminate tellingly among the shades of sentimentality which occupy the Japanese mind and they try to clarify the obscure (to us) motivations behind the political ambidexterity of certain writers and directors, such as Tadashi Imai (whose films have not been circulated in the U. S.), by reminding us again of that "Japanese genius for the *volteface,* and the completely apolitical quality of the Japanese character."

Audience vagaries are usually amusing, when not depressing, to read about. Anderson and Richie's resumé of the die-hard *benshi* tradition—i.e. of a live narrator who explained the movie, even after the sound-

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film had seemingly preempted his function!—is an especially hilarious episode. Today, the Japanese public, part of that "revolution of rising expectations" defined by our State Department, naturally reflects and in turn assists the industry's corruption. Similarities to the American scene are compounded by a voracious teen-age audience, Fan Clubs (Maria Schell, the Swiss Gish, is the current idol), the middlebrow confusion of near-art with the real thing and virtually the same Hollywood hits at the box-office. The mediocrity of the *average* Japanese film (you may be happily unaware of the phenomenon) is of course directly related to these demands and sustained by the pressures of top-speed production with which we're familiar elsewhere: the lack of good scenarios (most writers are given two weeks for a complete script!) and a system of tight shooting schedules (30 to 50 days, unless a tyrant like Kurasawa imposes his will and prestige). Yet the *excellent* Japanese films are created in the teeth of these conditions; like the best European films they furnish support to the equation of art with limited investments and with less than comfortable working standards: an inescapable truism.

All such data provide us with an approach to functioning aspects of Japanese film, the nature of which we'd never deduce on our own, and this subject with its ramifications takes up about three-fourths of the Anderson-Richie research. When the authors (or Donald Richie—I believe this is the correct division of emphasis) get to the consequential product—the exceptional films, their content and their sources—we are not taken by them as far as I think we have a right to expect. Richie is facile when summarizing the generic subjects but he resumés a legion of films as *situation* outlines merely, without conveying their unifying quality as *cinema*. Not consistently, I hasten to add: for some directors he has special empathy and in those cases he particularizes with insight. But I feel that much of the time he has purposely stayed his hand in favor of an agreement to resumé the sociology of the Japanese filmmaker, or because he's saving his best for another book. I make this claim with the knowledge that Richie *can* say it. His essay on Yasujiro Ozu which appeared in *Film Quarterly* last year[2] is one of the most sensitive expositions of a film style I've come across in some years. Explaining Ozu's characteristic preference for the immobile camera (no pan-shots, rarely a dolly), placed about three feet above floor level, Richie concludes:

> This traditional view is the view in repose, commanding a very limited field of vision. It is the attitude for watching, for listening, it is the position from which one sees the Noh, from which one partakes of the tea ceremony. It is the aesthetic attitude; it is the passive attitude. . . . Inextricable from Buddhist precepts, it puts the world at a distance and leaves the spectator uninvolved; a mere recorder of im-

[2] "The Later Films of Yasujiro Ozu," by Donald Richie. *Film Quarterly*. Univ. of California Press. XIII-1, Fall, 1959.

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pressions which he may register but which do not personally involve him. Ozu's camera is Leonardo's mirror in the Orient.

The reader of *The Japanese Film* will be treated to no such felicities of interpretation and he will be little satisfied with Richie's diffident treatments of the Japanese masterpieces he *has* seen, or with Richie's curiously superficial summing-up of Kurasawa—whose own foreword to this book is coldly trite. There seem to be moments of doubt in Richie's mind as to the intelligence of his hypothetical reader: panic sets in and he lowers his sights. Rarely does he use a comparison from non-Japanese films loftier than those of John Ford or William Wyler (as if only America were the West?) yet he maintains a dogmatic aversion toward all *jedi-gekai* films not transformed into currently acceptable social terms. Extensive historical and anthropological inductions may not be a reasonable demand to make on a film critic: aesthetic appreciation is another matter. In other contexts Richie has declared his pleasure in period films which were frankly fantastic and beautiful, with no contemporary hints to be read into them. To suppress that pleasure here has a savor of puritan reaction, a fear of going counter to the current repudiation of that which is beautiful but not "true." As a salient example: his dismissal of *Senhime* for its "garish" color—and no further opinion advanced on the film—simply won't go down with anyone who has seen it, least of all the technicians of Eastman House (granted that total quality cannot be scientifically authorized!). In this direction the most lamentable deficiency of the book is its poor photographic selections. While Richie (or Anderson, or both) underlines the importance of Nature in Japanese movies, no more than nine of the ninety-six stills confirm this importance. Incidentally, setting three stills to a page demands an acutely balanced arrangement; it's regrettable that so few have been planned to set off each other or to characterise at a glance the films they illustrate.

Still and all, *The Japanese Film* is one for the permanent shelf. I'd simply recommend to the reader who mayn't have an insatiable thirst for mercantile particulars going directly to the biographical chapter near the end, on *Directors,* where he'll be faced at once and vividly with the fact of personality in the Japanese film-studio world. In that sharply concentrated introduction to The Nine, he will get his bearings and readily assimilate the varied working principles of the important Japanese film-makers; after which, he should turn to the chapter, *Content,* then decide for himself in what order he's prepared to undertake the remaining background material. The book is far too interesting to lose any readers but I fear it may do so if they try advancing into it chronologically . . . Since books on visual art can be expected to greet the eye with an arresting format, it's relevant to extol the producers of this volume. Designed by M. Weatherby, printed in Tokyo, issued in the U.S.A. by a small Vermont press, *The Japanese Film* is a handsome commodity, durably bound and attractive in every feature.

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JOSEPH BENNETT

I've Got a Little List

> .... The Diva whose
> Fioriture and climactic note
> The silly old composer never wrote,
> Conductor *X*, that overrated bore
> Who alters tempi and who cuts the score,
> Director *Y* who with ingenious wit
> Places his wretched singers in the pit
> While dancers mime their roles, *Z* the Designer
> Who sets the whole thing on an ocean liner. . . .[1]

MOZART'S SCORES, PROTECTED BY THE PROSODY of Sir W. S. Gilbert; this poem (to be spoken by Sarastro in *The Magic Flute)* is the best thing in Mr. Auden's book. There is also a delightfully Augustan tribute to the Canon of Christ Church (the *House* if you please!), and an occasional sparkle of wit in a poem about installing an American kitchen in Austria. These, with their playful but satisfying brilliance, are the only poems in Mr. Auden's book which come to life. The others lie dead on the plate, like flat fish a few days out of water.

Sarastro's speech on Mozart is very good:

> And even those *Divertimenti* which
> He wrote to play while bottles were uncorked,
> Milord chewed noisily, Milady talked,
> Are heard in solemn silence, score on knees,
> Like quartets by the deafest of the *B*'s.

And Dr. Claude:

> Let both our Common Rooms combine to cheer
> This day when you complete your eightieth year . . .
> While in cold *Mercury*, complacent fish
> From well-fed tummies belch a birthday wish.

Pope in our day, with yet a touch of the seventeenth century, of the Milton minor poems—dry, wry, clean and clear, witty, direct, resourceful. Yes, certainly what we need and want; one thinks of Mr. Auden's librettos—those superb works—*The Rake's Progress, The Magic Flute* —masterpieces of their kind. Is he not our da Ponte, the only librettist of our time?

But what is all this other stuff cluttering up the book? Why is it

[1] HOMAGE TO CLIO, by *W. H. Auden*. Random House. $3.50. A WINTER COME, A SUMMER GONE, by *Howard Moss*. Scribner's. $3.50. WHAT A KINGDOM IT WAS, by *Galway Kinnell*. Houghton Mifflin. $3.00. THE MIDDLE PASSAGE, by *Louis Coxe*. University of Chicago Press. $3.75.

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there? This sober, serious, mawkish monody, these limp, lame-brained refrains. Are they tongue-in-cheek? Or has the Great Goddess crept in beside the heroic couplets, in between Sarastro, Dr. Claude, and the Lower Austrian Kitchen?

It seems our da Ponte, our librettist, wants to be one of those modern poets—of the broody, belchy, interminably boring kind: pointing at chills and skeletons, hinting at deep secrets, accumulating all the paraphernalia of world-weariness, mystical illusion, and wordplay on "love." The word, so overworked—Mr. W. C. Williams had already killed it. But here is a whole undigested mess—an Interlude of prosy, scrambled sighs and pre-poetic maunderings and jottings—all about "love"—and called "An Unwritten Poem" by its shame-faced author.

In the 1930's Auden was hailed as the brightest of the bright young poets. He attacked serious themes with solemn serious faces and notions; he gave funny answers to funny problems, cracking a smile. The fact is that now the best of those poems are the funny ones—and the funny lines are the ones that are remembered—"the sensitive amusers and the masked amazers." What about all those Marxist factory chimneys? The unfunny poems are very unfunny indeed. They were, in all their mawkish pretentiousness, the victims of a vogue which died with the Battle of Britain, the 1940 of the Spitfires. And with it passed into limbo the Serious Bright Young Poets of the Movement, the fashionable rhetoricians of the 1930s.

"We have *Stravinsky*—bless him!—with us yet." Well, let's have some more Auden. Enough of these Enchafèd Floods, these Shields of Achilles, these Homages to Clio. As he says: "One guesses at once from the perfect buttocks, / The flawless mouth too grand to have corners, / Whom the colossus must be."

> The mighty mother, and her son, who brings
> The Smithfield muses to the ear of kings.

Howard Moss does not do any better than Auden; he lacks the libretto passages that redeem the Auden book and keep it from being a waste of time. Mr. Moss outdoes Mr. Auden in his use of the word "love"—it's on every other page, sometimes twice. What has the Jehovah of Paterson done to our language? Will there be any words left? After page 11½ (three appearances), the word has no meaning—and there are still 149½ pages to go. After page 12 (three appearances), the word has lost its sound; it's just a dull, meaningless thud; and 149 pages to go. What's the point of a book like this? It comes surrounded by garland wreaths; fashionably concocted, confected, pre-fabricated; correct; stylish. But *Why?* What is its *raison d'être?* Flaccid, tired, dead language; deaf imagination. Wit?

> The sweet sun sieved vague afternoons.
> The beach was a waste of lace, and sandy.

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Raspberry sherbet went down in spoons
To prove the summer was a box of candy.

Poetry *is* a serious art.

Galway Kinnell's volume seems to lack direction and shape until one reaches his long poem "The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ Into the New World." "The Avenue" is a memorable poem. Set these lines against Mr. Auden's deciduous mumblings at Clio's expense, or Mr. Moss's ultra-violet and infra-red clichés:

Fishes do not die exactly, it is more
That they go out of themselves, the visible part
Remains the same, there is little pallor,
Only the cataracted eyes which have not shut ever
Must look through the mist which crazed Homer.

These are the vegetables of the deep,
The Sheol-flowers of darkness, swimmers
Of denser darknesses where the sun's rays bend for the last time.

Mr. Kinnell uses a surface realism that is effective and spare, never gaudy, to express the classical imagination. The locale is pin-pointed, realized; it blooms. The efficient images—"A propane-/gassed bus makes its way with big, airy sighs"—exist not for themselves but for the increment, the march of the poem. With its swarming masses of concrete detail, expressionist in technique, sensual, it is finely picked over and assembled. The result gleams with a strange chilling beauty; a work of art; frightening and cold. Mr. Kinnell is every bit the craftsman. And what he has crafted has life, has a horrible finality.

He has been with Stetson in the ships at Mylae, in the *fourmillante cité,* but he has learned the essential rule that so few grasp while lessoning there: handle the language, make it serve you. The poem is eclectic, carefully edited. It springs from Baudelaire and *The Waste Land* in a rigorous sort of way. It's not derivative, but it couldn't have been done without mad Hieronymo:

On the Avenue, through air tinted crimson
By neon over the bars, the rain is falling.
You stood once on Houston, among panhandlers and winos
Who weave the eastern ranges, learning to be free . . .

The poet seems to be influenced by Eliot wearing the mask of W. C. Williams. He tries to work a bit of Williams into the surface; it comes out *Waste Land,* as it should, since what is good in Williams is *Waste Land* Eliot. *J'oïs la cloche de Serbonne,* Kinnell tells us. It's what Eliot got in turn from Laforgue.

Baudelaire, Laforgue, Eliot—*fourmillante cité, L'Hiver Qui Vient, What the Thunder Said*—all at work on Manhattan's Lower East Side.

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How many people have not tried to do this, if not to Manhattan, to Metropolis in America—to bring Baudelaire's Metropolis, its fogs, to America's shores. Kinnell comes near to succeeding:

> That night a wildcat cab whined crosstown on 7th.
> You knew even the traffic lights were made by God,
> The red splashes growing dimmer the farther away
> You looked, and away up at 14th, a few green stars;
> And without sequence, and nearly all at once,
> The red lights blinked into green,
> And just before there was one complete Avenue of green,
> The little green stars in the distance blinked.
>
> It is night and raining. You look down
> Towards Houston in the rain, the living streets,
> Where instants of transcendence
> Drift in oceans of loathing and fear, like lanternfishes,
> Or phosphorus flashings in the sea, or the feverish light . . .

Perhaps he succeeds. He almost succeeds. He needs a bit of purification, to get at the root of the problem, slough off the excess. A poetry of essences, really, he should aim at. This is a remarkable and exciting work.

Louis Coxe's narrative poem, *The Middle Passage,* has got a strong Masefieldian drive to its blank verse:

> It was New England April at the docks:
> You know the kind: wet wind, a threat of snow
> While sky plays open and shut. That kind of day—
> A fine day for hauling south by east
> And making good your seven or eight knots.

The directness of statement is simple and appealing. The narrative takes hold and pulls the reader's interest along. As the jacket says, it is a novel in verse. The range of sensibility is narrow and conventional, but the drive is there.

Though the blank verse is old-fashioned, the content has been updated to take in some of the prime attractions of contemporary best-seller taste. The narrative, of the Yankee slave trade, seems based at least in part on some of the sources used by R. P. Warren for the high-jinxed nonsense in his claptrap popular novel *Band of Angels.* Both go into the Dark Continent in the 1840s—Coxe at Sherbro Island, Warren at Whidah in Dahomey. Unfortunately, though Sherbro and Dahomey are 1300 miles apart, the same Portugee slave trader, Da Souza, welcomes them ashore at both places. Bruise-purple sensationalism bristles in the theme; neon-lighted sexuality and sadism lure the movie producer.

So I am virtually at a loss to say why I like the Coxe poem, why it

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holds my interest so consistently. It may be the lurid aspects. Or it may (I hope) be simply the fact that he is a good storyteller and that the blank-verse is efficiently handled; that is, he keeps you moving along. It *is* more vivid than prose:

> That last night—like the night before the Fall—
> An air high up where the skysails gathered it
> Impelled the vessel upright on her keel
> As though a metal fragment sought the pole. . . .
>
> While under the southern coal-hole, pit of black
> Unstarred, the vessel swirled up flakes of light
> That washed off aft and fell to dark again. . . .
>
> His smile was vicious, opening the lips
> Like a rifle-breech, and all was smooth, dark, oiled
> For death. . . .

Which is to say that a novel may be more interesting, more exciting, when told in verse. Melodrama, too, becomes more exciting.

The poem has *force;* it achieves power through direct blunt assertion. Its style is derivative and not highly imaginative. It lacks psychological perspective and its characters are stereotypes. Coxe likes rough stuff, harsh and direct. He strikes heavily, squarely, and lets the chips fall:

> A monument to money long since gone
> Or heaped in trusts for widows, spinsters, sons
> Who leech on blood they'd never dare to drink,
> Another curse for Salem. Drink to them all!
> Witch-finders, slavers, bankers, mill-town men:
> Lawrence, Lowell, Canot, Cotton Mather
> A trinity with one substitute. . . .

The poem is professionally unmincing, relentless and raw. I like this virile, old-fashioned work. It may be the stalwart male speech, the self-confidence and security of its well-tested and dependable metric. Or surprise at the choice of such a theme for a poem.

Mr. Coxe, who has in general found the lyric unresponsive to his abilities, has demonstrated here a strong narrative gift. He is sticking to the familiar ground, as to period and atmosphere, which he covered in his stage transcription of *Billy Budd.* He seems, in *The Middle Passage,* to be afraid of nothing and to have no guilt; he has a startling self-confidence. Perhaps, as a creative artist, he needs just a touch of guilt and fear, a bit less self-confidence. This would make for more subtlety and more imagination, and a less hide-bound metric.

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